

CINDY CRAWFORD ON NET PRIVACY AND

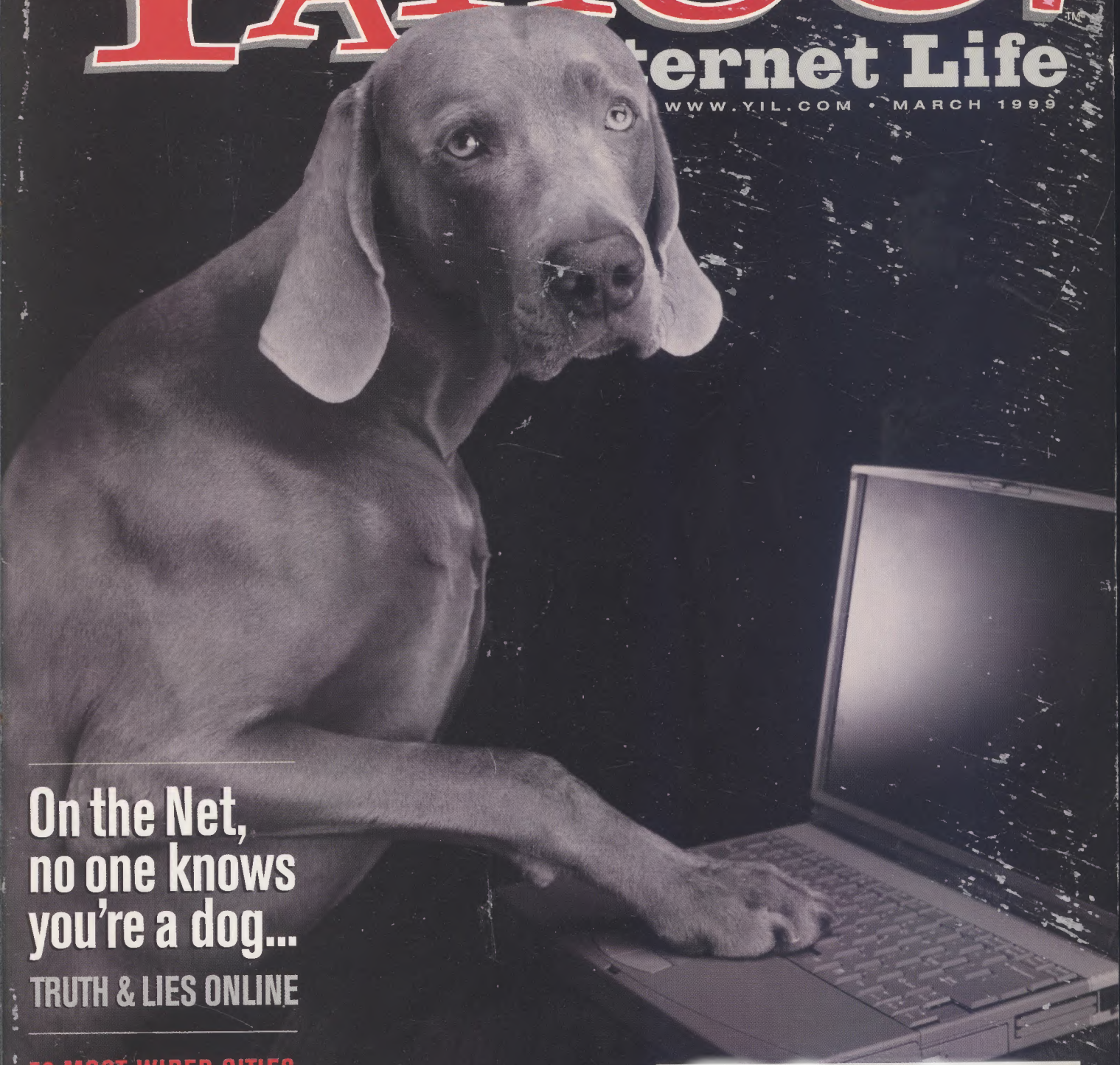
SEX APPEAL



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Internet Life

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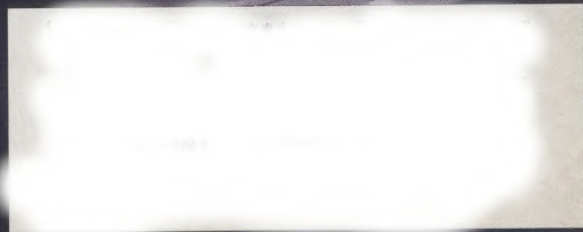
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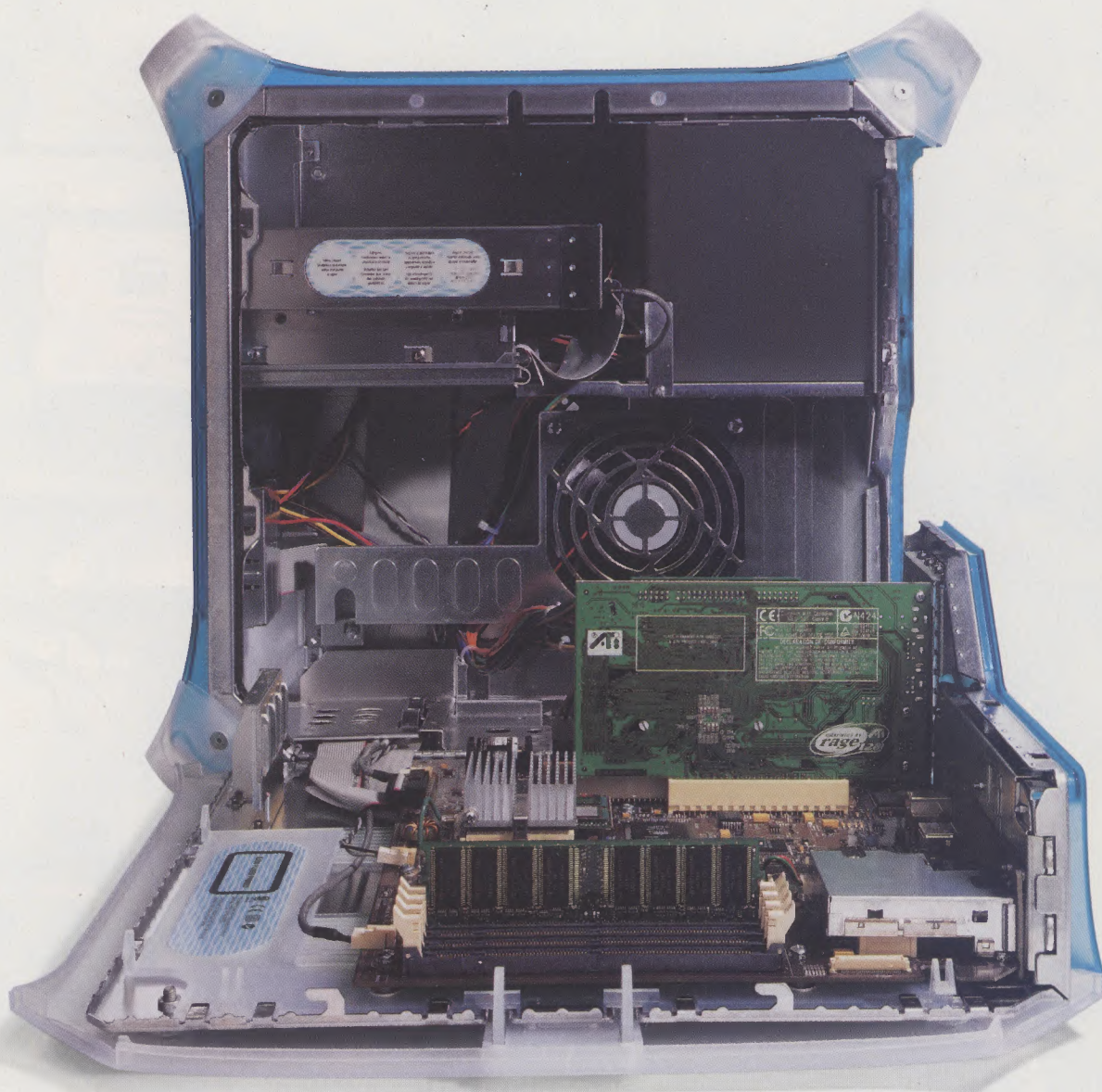
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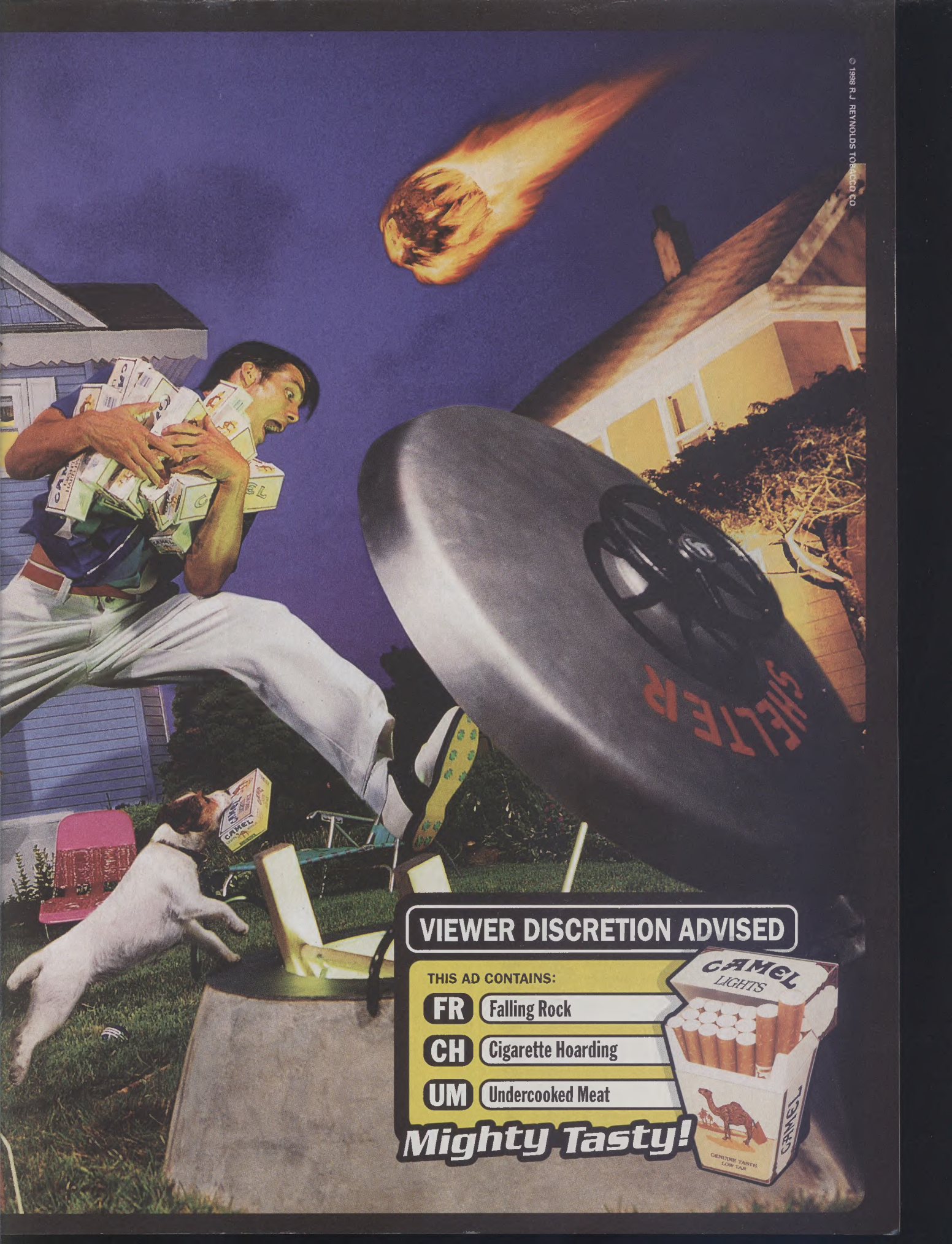
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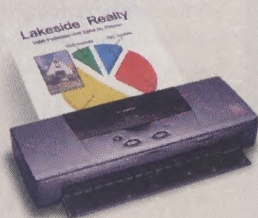
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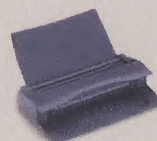
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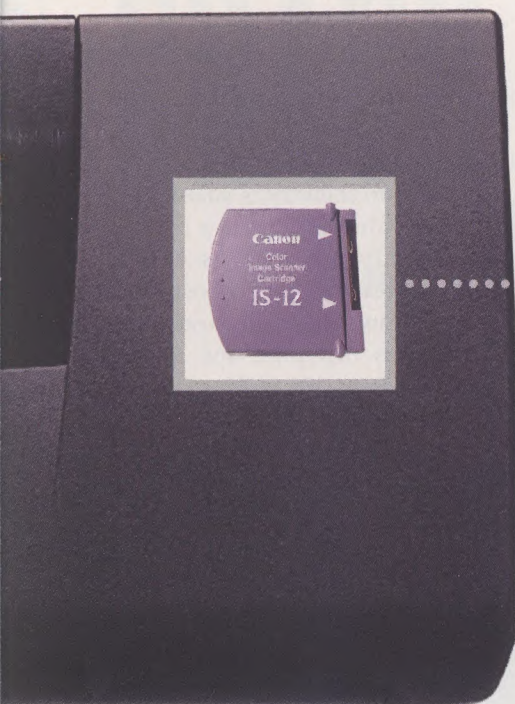
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Untruth and Consequences

Last year's news was about privacy and lying (in the White House), this year it's likely to be about the consequences thereof (in the nation at large). On the Internet, these topics have a particular resonance, because the logical consequence of wanting to safeguard our privacy online—the most cherished right for many Net surfers—is having to practice deception. Screen names, pseudonyms, and false identities are at the heart of Net culture. To some it's harmless role-playing—as well as the best method for staying out of harm's way. But we wondered about the effects of an information highway on which the 80 million drivers have neither driver's licenses (fine by us) nor license plates to identify them (maybe not so fine).

Executive Editor **Ben Greenman** reports the story by talking to Net users, researchers on Net behavior, marketers, and a few groundbreaking thinkers on the subject. Inspired by a now-legendary *New Yorker* cartoon caption, we also commissioned art photographer **William Wegman** to give life to the cover topic: "On the Internet, No One Knows You're a Dog." (See page 10 for the back story.) Wegman's celebrated

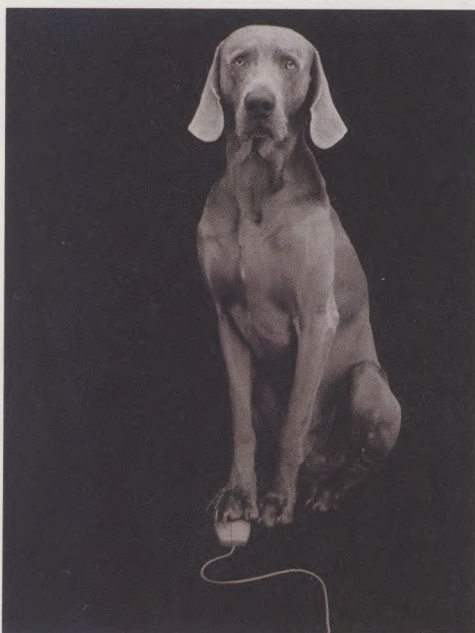
model Chip strikes a dog-and-mouse pose on this page.

Speaking of cars and highways, in "The Great American Car Chase," San Francisco-based writer **Sean Kelly** looks at how

the auto industry is adjusting to the new virtual realities in a race to keep up with wired car buyers. After poring over research printed out from the Web, and availing themselves of new services that price and locate cars, purchasers are walking into showrooms newly armed with sticker-price empowerment. For those of you trying it for the first time, we've included step-by-step driving instructions.

This month also marks our second annual "Most Wired Cities" roundup, whose rankings can make or break a mayor—at least the way *our* readers vote. Contributing writer **Dina Gan** sifted through the stats to make San Francisco a very happy burg. And *PC Magazine's* **David Lidsky** weighs in with an update on Net city guides.

Finally, with another link to our cover theme, supermodel **Cindy Crawford** talked to West Coast Editor **David Sheff** about her new Web site—and about the risks of dealing with fans who might not be telling the truth about themselves. In all, a truth-telling issue. And that's no lie.



WILLIAM WEGMAN

Barry Golson

Barry Golson Editor in Chief

Letters to the editor: backchat@zd.com

OUR TEAR-OUT SITE ADDRESS GUIDE IS ON PAGE 25

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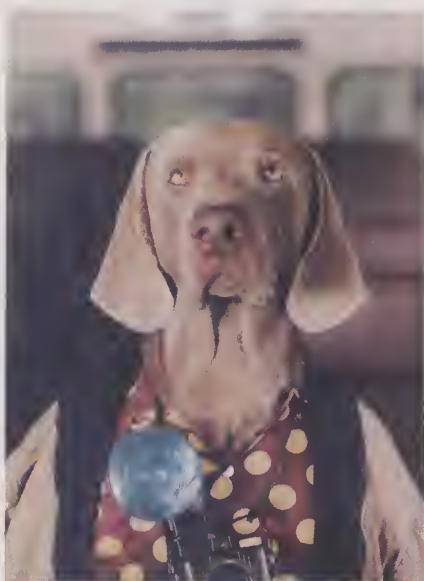
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Dog Bytes, Man

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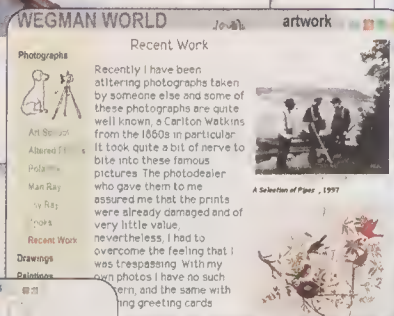
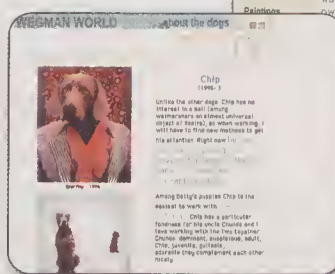


When you arrive at **Wegman World** [www.wegmanworld.com], the dog is the first thing you notice. It's also the second thing, and the third. It's understandable: The site was created to promote and display the works of artist William Wegman, who shot this

month's *Y-Life* cover. Wegman is best known, of course, for his highly stylized, posed photographs of his pet weimaraners—original collaborator Man Ray, the lovely Fay Ray, and current models Battina and Chip (our cover dog, whose pose marks the first time Wegman has incorporated computers into his work). Wegman World features an online gallery of the artist's works, an online store that sells Wegman's books, and even a family tree of Wegman's best friends. But it's not only a dog-link-to-dog world, as there are also areas devoted to his paintings, photo drawings, and other noncanine artworks. What's the future of Wegman World? Well, Wegman plans to add Internet-only art, and resources for his other loves, including early music. And there are even plans to link to sites for—what else?—weimaraner breeders.

Dressed to the Canines: Chip, Fay Ray, and a bewigged Crooky (top row); the artist with some of his models (inset); and Wegman as Web man (right).

Wegman World



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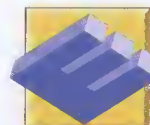
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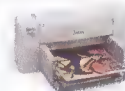
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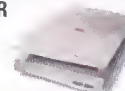


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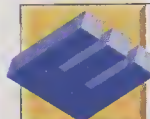
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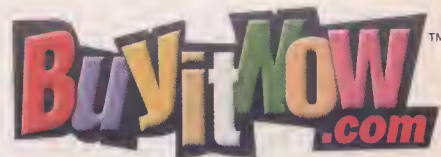
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Home, Jeeves!

I first bought your magazine thanks to your Niki Taylor cover (October '98), and I've been a loyal reader ever since. I've enjoyed your mix of insightful articles about the Net and shorter, funnier pieces. And then came January, which was *full* of shorter, funnier pieces, including the fantastic little piece on page 36, "What Jeeves Said." It made me laugh out loud to see a magazine finally taking one of these online "personalized thinking" services and hoisting it by its own petard. So many tech magazines are foolish boosters for the technology their advertisers peddle, but you've managed to be an independent voice, and not to get too heavy-handed about it. There's nothing quite like using real intelligence to embarrass artificial intelligence.

—SAM LLOYD
rstlssknd@yahoo.com

Isn't Net Romantic?

It is always a welcome sight for me to see the good things that happen online. Your "Love and Sex on the Net" articles in the February issue (page 78) showed that although some bad relationships are in the news constantly, love survives and lives on the Net. I have been living for seven months now with a man I met online. I have never had such a strong relationship in my life. We have dedicated a Web site to Internet romance. Thanks for showing the love side of the Net!

—CYNDI E.
cyndi_e@hotmail.com

This, We Think, /s a Quote from Him

I'm thrilled, honestly, to be quoted between Barbie and Dr. Laura ("Top of the Net," January '99, page 102). But the item is clearly lifted verbatim from Owen Thomas's "Ditherati" daily publication, complete with misattribution. (See www.ditherati.com/archive/1998/09.)

This is not a complaint, but rather a plug for the prolific Mr. Thomas, whose work I see repurposed every-

where. Instead of letting him continue to provide free fodder for freelancers, I suggest dropping him a line and offering him the next quote-gathering job directly. I'm convinced you'll find yourself with a reliable supply of exceptional material suitable for your specific audience—and guaranteed Y2K-compliant.

—PAUL BOUTIN
paul@wired.com

Our apologies for the careless dithering. —Ed.

Just Turn Left at the First Dot

"The Road to Webville" (January '99, page 110) was an excellent article that put online communities on the map. Unfortunately, anyone trying to find Virtual Jerusalem by your directions would get lost. There was a mistake in the URL (which was correctly published on page 25). Virtual Jerusalem, the largest online Jewish and Israel-related community, can be found at www.virtualjerusalem.com.

—FAYE BITTKER
faye@vcimail.com

One Happy House

Everyone here at HouseNet is thrilled to be rated "Best Do-It-Yourself Ideas" in your "Best of the Best Sites '98" review (January '99, page 134). When Gene and I started HouseNet as a BBS in 1991—in a bedroom office with a 1,200-baud modem—we never envisioned it leading us to the exciting online world of today.

—KATIE HAMILTON
katie@mail.housenet.com

That's Us—Gutsy and Absurd

I was just reading my January '99 issue of *Y-Life*, when I found in your "Click! Attitude" column (page 50) a Ya-Hooey! thumbs-down for America Online's CD-ROM sign-up disks. Since your January issue was packaged with these disks, I found your derision gutsy, albeit a bit absurd, to say the least. I wonder if that bite will render

AOL's hand too bloody to slap you in the face.

—BETH GORELL
gorell@hpssg06.mayfield.hp.com

What About Some New "Friends"?

First, let me say that I am 16 years old, and I have used [the instant-messaging application] ICQ for over a year now. When I told my friends about ICQ, they went out and got it right away. But then they found all of the ICQ port sniffers and ICQ IP-address sniffers. Then they figured out that they could download programs (known as "nukers") to disconnect me from the Internet. It got to the point that every time I got on, I would be nuked. It really torques me off. It got so bad that I just deleted ICQ altogether. I really liked to use it, too. But with all of that other stuff out there, I guess there are just too many temptations.

—JESSE C. CARR
jecarr@sendit.nodak.edu

Mistaken Identity

Is it just me, or does your picture of "virgin Diane" on page 85 of the January '99 issue look like the red-head—I think her name was Michelle—from "Road Rules Europe" on MTV? If it's not her, she must be a doppelgänger.

—J. O'NEILL
joneill4@ptd.net

You'll Always Have Paris

I have been trying to access www.pageszoom.com, the Web site recommended by Roger Ebert ("Critical Eye," February '99, page 64), and I have been unsuccessful. Can you help me out? Thank you.

—MARYJMQ@AOL.COM

The site, which is operated by France Télécom and features online phone directories and maps of Paris, does indeed exist—but its name has been changed. It is now known as Les Pages Jaunes, and can be found at www.pagesjaunes.fr. —Ed.

Right in Our Own Backyard

Your article on slow-to-load, graphics-rich Web sites was right on target ("He Ain't Heavy, He's My Browser," December '98, page 128). I have to have totally different Web strategies at my office (where I have a fast LAN connection to the Web) and at home (a dial-up modem). But you left out my No. 1 choice for news anywhere I happen to be: Yahoo! News, at dailynews.yahoo.com. (I usually go straight to the top-stories summary.) The graphics-light Yahoo! news pages load quickly, even with a 28.8Kbps modem connection; the coverage is broad, well organized, and well updated; and you have a one-click choice of news sources (Reuters, AP, etc.). For top speed, content, and clean layout, it really blows the others away.

—PETER SHAW

Peter.Shaw@swd02.usace.army.mil

Talking Up Travel

I'm new to your magazine, but I like it. I especially liked January's "Best of the Best" reviews. Very useful information! However, I couldn't figure out why, in your travel reviews, you didn't include www.lowairfare.com. These guys have a very different site from all of the others I've visited, in that they include the opportunity to interact with a travel agent in a "chat" format. This is a great alternative for those with immediate questions about itinerary or what have you. On top of that, they were far cheaper than any others I tried.

—JOHN SEMANCHUK

bigkid@cchat.com

On the Water, but Not Surfing

I think that you have a great magazine. I am a U.S. Marine aboard the *U.S.S. Nassau*, and get your mag. The only thing

is that we only have e-mail and no Internet, so I cannot visit Web sites. Please watch a football game for me.

—CORPORAL BRIAN O. LABRECQUE
labrecquebo@24meu.usmc.mil

A Bit of Guide Guidance

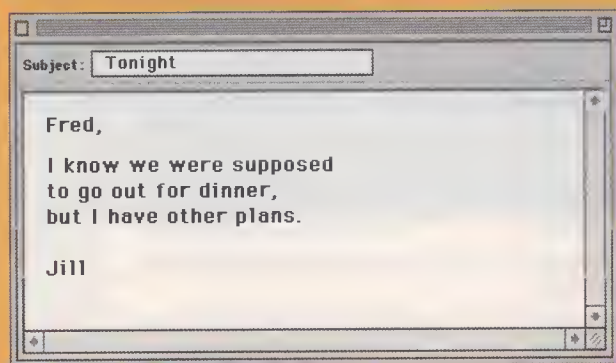
I enjoy *Y-Life* each month. I read it word for word, highlighting as I go. My one suggestion: I tear out the "Site Address Guide," tape it to a loose-leaf page, and keep it in a binder on my desk. It would be a great help if the guide came ready for saving, with a wide offset to the left of either page—or you could move the fold to accommodate perforation and filing.

—JERRY E. BRUNK

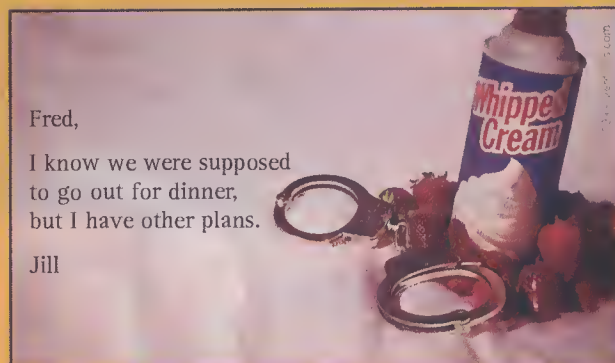
GRAMPJERRY@aol.com

Look again, Jerry: The page is offset and perforated, and it has punch-out holes for a binder. Incredibly useful, we call it.—Ed.

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Net Essentials: The bookmarks you must have. www.yil.com/essentials

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(PAGE 10)

- Wegman World
www.wegmanworld.com

LIAR LIAR (PAGES 88-93, 132, 133)

- Judith S. Donath
judith.www.media.mit.edu/Judith
- ECHO www.echonyc.com
- 9th WWW User Survey
www.cc.gatech.edu/gvu/user_surveys/survey-1998-04/graphs/general/q46.htm
- A Rational Argument for Lying on Surveys
db.matadorrec.com/survey
- Stay Free! metalab.unc.edu/stayfree/15
- E-Mail Forgery www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8441/forgery2.html

FACE TIME WITH CINDY CRAWFORD
(PAGES 94-97)

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AMERICA'S 50 MOST WIRED CITIES AND TOWNS
(PAGES 102-109)**Most Wired City Guides**

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www.citysearch.com
- Cox Interactive Media
www.cimedia.com/sites.html
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THE GREAT AMERICAN CAR CHASE
(PAGES 110-115)

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www.autoweb.com
- CarPoint carpoint.msn.com
- Car and Driver Online
www.caranddriver.com
- Edmund's www.edmunds.com
- Kelley Blue Book
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- CarFinance.com
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- PeopleFirst Finance
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- Toyota www.toyota.com
- Carprice.com www.carprice.com
- Bank Rate Monitor
www.bankrate.com
- Negotiation Dynamics
www.negotiationdynamics.com

COLUMNS**ROGER EBERT: CRITICAL EYE**
(PAGE 78)

- MIT Media Lab www.media.mit.edu

CHARLES PAPPAS: SAFETY NET
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- Anti-Defamation League
www.adl.org
- Cyber Patrol www.cyberpatrol.com
- The Internet Filter Assessment Project
www.bluehighways.com/tifap
- Family Research Council
www.frc.org
- Stormfront www.stormfront.org
- Resistance Records
www.resistance.com
- God Hates Fags
www.godhatesfags.com
- Christian Defense League
home.inreach.com/dov/cdl.htm
- Aryan Nations www.nidlink.com/~aryanvic
- National Alliance www.natvan.com
- Privacy Journal www.townonline.com/privacyjournal
- HateWatch www.hatewatch.org
- Southern Poverty Law Center
www.spicenter.org

ANNETTE HAMILTON: REALITY CHECK
(PAGE 84)

- MP3.com www.mp3.com
- Matt Drudge www.drudgereport.com
- Salon www.salonmagazine.com
- The Onion www.theonion.com

DEPARTMENTS**CLICK (PAGES 33-52)**

- Frank Lloyd Wright www.pbs.org/flw
- My So-Called Claire Danes Home Page
www.clairedanes.com
- Angelica Reigns Supreme
www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/Stage/6602

- **Kortney's Home Page Shrine to Matthew McConaughey**
www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Hills/2200

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- **"FoxTrot"** www.foxtrot.com
- **Game Revolution**
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- **The Top Five List** www.topfive.com

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www.earningswhispers.com
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- **Audible** www.audible.com
- **PostOffice Online** www.postofficeonline.com/POLPublic20/Survey/NewUser.asp

Click Personal

- **A First-Timer's Guide to Jingle Collecting**
freespace.virgin.net/david.hemsley1/collectors.htm
- **About Geysers...** www2.wku.edu/www/geoweb/geyser/about2.html
- **The Parasitic Plant Connection**
www.science.siu.edu/parasitic-plants
- **Field Guide to Freshwater Mussels of the Midwest** www.inhs.uiuc.edu/chf/pub/muscel_man/cover.html
- **Hogan's Heroes** www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Set/6405
- **The Music of Johnny Cash**
maninblack.net
- **Stonehenge: Gateway to the Realms**
home.earthlink.net/~shadowfax
- **The Columbus Navigation Home Page**
www1.minn.net/~keithp
- **The Godfather Trilogy** www.jgeoff.com/godfathr.html

Click Games

- **GameStorm** www.gamestorm.com
- **Happy Puppy**
www.happypuppy.com
- **Heat.net** www.heat.net
- **Wing Commander**
www.wcmovie.com
- **GameSlice** www.gameslice.com
- **Half-Life: Team Fortress**
www.sierrastudios.com/games/teamfortress
- **MysteryNet.com**
www.mysterynet.com
- **GameFAQs** www.gamefaqs.com

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www.ylive.com
- **Simpsons Chat** www.ultimatetv.com/interact/chat/rooms/simpsons.html
- **Walden** www.talkcity.com/calendar/events/event680.html
- **The Prescription** www.sportsworld.com/gambling/shrink.stm
- **Rock n' Roll Insider Chat** chat.yahoo.com
- **Victoria Magazine Readers**
www.talkcity.com/calendar/events/event2619.html
- **The World of Theme Parks** expedia.msn.com/forums/theme/chatroom.hts?
- **Food & Wine Chat** www.pathfinder.com/FoodWine/webcast/sked.html
- **Parenttime** chat.yahoo.com
- **What If?** chat01.asylum.com/studio-i/reoccurring_schedule.html
- **Ask the Pros Chat** www.gmgoodwrench.com/pros/schedulemain.htm
- **Caribbean Travel Chat** expedia.msn.com/forums/caribb/chatroom.hts?
- **Rock & Roll Hangover**
static.pseudo.com/hangover

- **Live X** www.audionet.com/music/shows/livex
- **EA Pajama Party** chat01.asylum.com/studio-i/reoccurring_schedule.html
- **Hooked on Fishing with Brian Hoffman**
www.broadcast.com/radio/sports/knhr
- **Snapshots to Photograph**
worldwithoutborders.com/calendar/snap.shtml
- **FitNet** www.broadcast.com/sports/shows/fitnet
- **Rush Room** www.talkcity.com/calendar/events/event31.html
- **The Best of the Blues Featuring "King Ro"** www.broadcast.com/radio/shows/kingro

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- **New Chinese Art: Inside Out**
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- **StarChefs** www.starchefs.com
- **HotBot** www.hotbot.com

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COOL TOOLS (PAGES 54-58)

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- ☐ Loewe www.loewetv.com
- ☐ FoneCam www.fonecam.com
- ☐ TaskFlex www.taskflex.com
- ☐ Lextra MouseRug
www.mouserug.com

E-Z USER (PAGES 60-68)

- ☐ Arriba Vista
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- ☐ Ask the Surf Guru
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- ☐ WebFX cs.sonomeda.edu/kendrick/webfx
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www.Ordernet.com/VBOK
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- ☐ Net E-Z User
www.ezuser.com

E-Z SHOPPER (PAGE 72)

- ☐ MoMA Online Store
store.moma.org
- ☐ Back to Basics Toys
www.backtobasicstoy.com
- ☐ Bluefly www.bluefly.com
- ☐ eBay www.ebay.com
- ☐ The Eat Yer Face Gelatin Mold
www.eatyerface.8m.com

TOUCHEO BY THE NET (PAGES 74-76)

- ☐ Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) www.rawa.org
- ☐ Ask the Space Scientist image.gsfc.nasa.gov/poetry/ask/askmag.html
- ☐ American Sign Language Browser
www.commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb
- ☐ Progressive Stuff www.powerup.com.au/~dmcclore/progr.htm
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members.tripod.com/~Memory_WWII
- ☐ College Is Possible
www.collegeispossible.com

INCREDIOLY USEFUL SITES (PAGES 100-101)

- ☐ Aphorisms Galore!
www.aphorismsgalore.com
- ☐ Occupational Safety & Health Administration Statistics & Oata www.osha.gov/oshstats
- ☐ ACLU: National Freedom Scorecard
scorecard.aclu.org
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www.winespectator.com/Wine/Spectator/notes
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- ☐ National Crime Prevention Council: Children
www.ncpc.org/child.htm
- ☐ Allexperts.com www.allexperts.com

- ☐ Trademark Electronic Application System
www.uspto.gov/teas
- ☐ Alert-IPO! www.ostman.com/alert-ipo
- ☐ SkyTel: Send a Message!
www.skytel.com/Paging
- ☐ NetMechanic
www.netmechanic.com
- ☐ Incredibly Useful Site of the Oay
www.incrediblyuseful.com

OLD WAY/NET WAY (PAGES 116-117)

- ☐ Yahoo! Maps maps.yahoo.com/py/ddResults.py
- ☐ NetMarket www.netmarket.com
- ☐ eSmarts www.esmarts.com
- ☐ 888Camcorder
www.888camcorder.com

NEW, NOTABLE & FUN (PAGES 118-119)

- ☐ Or. Koop's Community
www.drkoop.com
- ☐ DealerNet www.dealernet.com
- ☐ womenCONNECT.com
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- ☐ Country.com www.country.com
- ☐ Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel Online
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www.iionline.com
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- ☐ Sean Hannity www.hannity.com
- ☐ Jane www.janemag.com/mainhome.htm
- ☐ EPE Online www.epemag.com
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- ☐ Fundango www.fundango.com
- ☐ Kids Bank.com
www.kidsbank.com
- ☐ Jesus2000 www.jesus2000.com
- ☐ Daytona Beach
www.daytonabeach.com
- ☐ Got Milk? www.gotmilk.com
- ☐ Jump! www.jump.com
- ☐ Useless Knowledge.com
www.uselessknowledge.com

PRETTY STRANGE (PAGE 134)

- ☐ The Folkways Archive <http://ftp.mcad.edu/piotr2/folkways/start.html>
- ☐ Shredder 1.0 www.potatoland.org/shredder
- ☐ Yahoo! Internet Life Online
www.yil.com
- ☐ Epicurious Food
www.food.epicurious.com
- ☐ ZONet www.zdnet.com
- ☐ Toothcam www.caltech.edu/~pinelab/TimeLapse/ToothCam/toothcam.html
- ☐ alt.mega-ego.yonderboy Manifesto
www.emf.net/~estephen/manifesto/aum00092.html
- ☐ German UFO Watch
www.aircooledmind.org/aliens.html
- ☐ Pretty Strange
www.prettystrange.com

"THE BEST" OF WEB SITE REVIEWS

IRISH TRADITIONS FOR ST. PATRICK'S DAY

(PAGE 120)

- ☐ St. Patrick's Festival
www.irish-times.com/St.Patricks
- ☐ Irish Tourist Board
www.ireland.travel.ie/home

GARDENING (PAGE 121)

- ☐ GardenGuides
www.gardenguides.com

BUYING USED BOOKS ONLINE (PAGE 122)

- ☐ Powell's Books
www.powells.com
- ☐ BookFinder.com
www.bookfinder.com
- ☐ Alibris www.alibris.com

ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE (PAGE 123)

- ☐ Ask Dr. Weil www.drweil.com

SITE SPOOFS (PAGE 124)

- ☐ Orudge Retort
www.drudge.com
- ☐ Star Wars Official Site Gag
www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Alley/7028/swosg.htm

RESOURCES FOR NEW PARENTS (PAGE 125)

- ☐ Dr. Greene's House Calls
www.drgreene.com

- ☐ Parent Soup
www.parentsoup.com

CONSUMER PROTECTION (PAGE 126)

- ☐ Consumer World
www.consumerworld.org
- ☐ Consumer Reports Online
www.consumerreports.org
- ☐ U.S. Consumer Gateway
www.consumer.gov
- ☐ Consumer Information Center
www.pueblo.gsa.gov
- ☐ Stock Detective
www.stockdetective.com

GAME SHOWS (PAGES 127-128)

- ☐ Jeopardy! www.station.sony.com/jeopardy
- ☐ Wheel of Fortune
www.station.sony.com/wheel
- ☐ Justin's Game Show Shrine
www.negia.net/~justind/shrine.html

INTERNATIONAL NEWS (PAGE 129)

- ☐ BBC News news.bbc.co.uk
- ☐ Electronic Telegraph
www.telegraph.co.uk

COMPUTER VIRUSES (PAGE 130)

- ☐ Computer Virus Myths
www.kumite.com/myths
- ☐ AntiVirus Online
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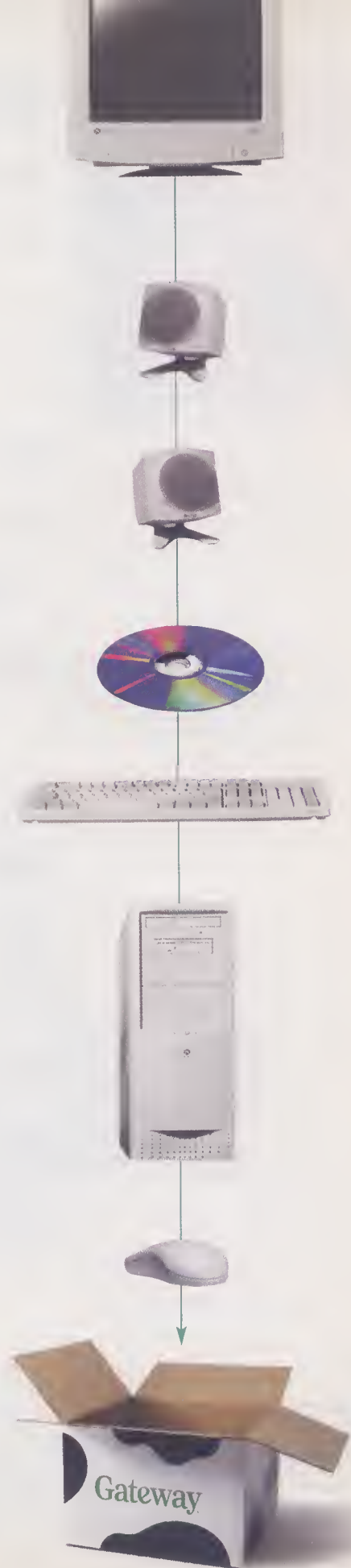
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DAISY FUENTES

Where on the Web are you most likely to run into Daisy Fuentes? Not at the model sites, nor at MTV Online or Revlon.com. Try the travel pages—especially if you're renting your house. "I like discovering new places," explains the model/actress and former veejay, "and a lot of times, people put their homes online directly, for holiday rentals." Fuentes says she surfs and keeps in touch with friends and family via WebTV, sending "gossip, jokes, how-ya-doin' [notes], chain letters, the works." She also reaches out to fans: "There's a guy who has a Web site dedicated to me, and the comments people left were really nice. So I left a note. He probably won't even think it's me." They'll know it's really Fuentes when they see the official site she's launching midyear. "I want to talk to people whenever I want," she says. "And offer things, from advice to products to ideas." Don't rule out apartment swaps, either.

—J.O.C.



MEMORABLE SITE

PBS Shows the Wright Stuff

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

[www.pbs.org/flw]

If I had another 15 years to work," said Frank Lloyd Wright in 1957, three years before his death at the age of 91, "I could rebuild this entire country. I could change the nation." One week later, Wright described himself in a television interview as possibly the greatest architect in the world. Was he? Peruse this Web companion to Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's recent PBS documentary, and decide for yourself. Study blueprints of Wright's most famous structures (including his Oak Park, Illinois, home and New York City's Guggenheim Museum) or hear, via RealPlayer clips, the praise of fellow architects Maya Lin and Phillip Johnson. If you want to see his artistry firsthand, use the Locator to find the nearest Wright creation. What better way to honor a genius than to walk inside the buildings of his mind—however big that head of his may have been? —M.F.



THE CLICK CLIQUE: James Oliver Cury, Dean Foust, Michael Freidson, Mark Glaser, Reuben Maness, Charles Pappas, Marc Saltzman. **Write to Click@zd.com.**

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CLAIRE DANES

In *My So-Called Life*, she dealt with the social hardships of high school. She's at Yale now, and the *Mod Squad* movie costar has no trouble being accepted on the Web. **YAHOO! SITE COUNT:** 38. Start @: **MY SO-CALLED CLAIRE DANES HOME PAGE** [www.clairedanes.com]



RUGRATS

Tommy, Angelica, and the rest of Nickelodeon's sugar babies make surfers drool, helped along by their movie and the cartoon's No. 1 status on cable TV. **YAHOO! SITE COUNT:** 20. Start @: **ANGELICA REIGNS SUPREME** [www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/Stage/6602]



MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY

He hasn't yet lived up to the *Vanity Fair*—cover hype, but *EdTV*'s star is the preoccupation of several Web "shrines." **YAHOO! SITE COUNT:** 13. Start @: **KORTNEY'S HOME PAGE SHRINE TO MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY** [www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Hills/2200]

Q+A

BILL AMEND

Why Is Jason So Smart?

Nethead Bill

Amend's popular comic strip "FOX-TROT" [www.foxtrot.com] features

Jason Fox, one of the comics' most PC-savvy characters for more than a decade. How does Amend know it all? *Y-Life* asked him for insight.

Y-LIFE: As a 36-year-old, do you find it hard to keep up with the Net as well as the 10-year-old Jason does?

AMEND: It's really hard, but that's part of the fun of writing a character like Jason. It makes me keep up with science, technology, and math.

Y-LIFE: Two or three years ago, comic strips started relying heavily upon the Net for story lines. Where have you been on the overall curve?

AMEND: I've been way ahead of [it]. My 1980 "FoxTrot" pilot strip [had] Jason using a modem. Hey, I was a physics major—I had an old Apple II and a 300-baud modem.

Y-LIFE: So do you find yourself holding back your techie tendencies when writing the strip?

AMEND: Yes, a little bit. It's probably better to do a lot of jokes that many people understand rather than a niche joke that maybe 1 percent of the population understands.

Y-LIFE: But have other cartoonists and your readers caught up?

AMEND: For now, "Dilbert" [creator Scott Adams] and I are sort of the lone guys coming at it from a techie angle. Ten years ago, if I talked to somebody about computer memory, they wouldn't know what I was talking about. And now, good Lord, even my mother knows.



JASON FOX (LEFT) AND QUINCY

"The Internet isn't hard to learn, but it helps to have time to play with it. Some people get nervous and think they're going to break it."

—ELIZABETH FRASER, A LIBRARIAN WHO ALSO TEACHES INTERNET-RELATED CLASSES IN WEST VIRGINIA, explaining the challenges facing her students to *The Charleston Gazette*

"There are plenty of video games where pulling off a man's head and drinking his blood is actively encouraged, and yet these people are worried about a pair of cartoon breasts."

—DUKE FERRIS, EDITOR IN CHIEF OF [www.gamerevolution.com], responding to a Cyber Patrol blacklist of his site on its Web filtering system

NET BRIEFS

SPAM WARS: AOL SCORES. America Online won civil suits recently against three spammers who have been inundating its members with junk mail. The company then filed nine more anti-spam suits....**ONLINE SHOPPING** revenues totaled \$5 billion during the 1998

holiday season—almost four times the amount

spent in the same 1997 period, says a report from Marketing Corporation of America.

On the whole, Net merchants accounted

for 1 percent of the nation's retail activity last year—a milestone....**SHREDDED PORK.** *ABC World News Tonight* anchor Peter Jennings reported recently that the film *Babe* was retitled, for Chinese audiences, *The Happy Dumpling-to-Be Who Talks and Solves Agricultural Problems*. Funny, except for the fact that the title was taken from the Web site [www.topfive.com], which posts humorous but fake lists to subscribers—complete with dis-

claimers. Alas, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* have also quoted the site in their own stories....**BROWSING ABROAD?** The White House has ruled in favor of exporting powerful data-encryption tools to other countries. As a result, the computer systems of overseas retailers—and your credit card information—will be that much more secure....

OUTPOST'S POSTS. At the end of each Outpost.com TV ad—the ones in which gerbils are fired from cannons onto a brick wall—viewer complaints are referred to the company's Web site. At last count, 65 percent of the more than 5,000 people writing in favor of the spot....**A WHITE HOUSE SCANDAL** of a different kind: Lawyers for the porn site Whitehouse.com groused to Netscape when they realized that the Netscape browser's "Enable Internet Keywords" feature points users to the only slightly less prurient Whitehouse.gov page. Netscape remained silent—that is, until the porn site's owner, Dan Parisi, posted his objections at Netscapesucks.com. The company's subsequent reply: "[You are one of many] opportunistic domain name businesses who garner traffic based on consumer confusion and typos. Netscape is not obligated to include you." So there. —M.F.

CLICKING '68: WATCH OUT FOR SPLINTERS!

The next time you're grouching about dust balls clogging up your mouse, imagine moving this behemoth around your desk. A little more than 30 years ago, computer researcher Dr. Douglas Engelbart demonstrated the first computer mouse (pictured at right), carved entirely of wood. Quick, where's that can of Lemon Pledge?



LOGITECH

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Regardless of what the subject matter is, HP can help it look more colorful. How? With PhotoREt Color Layering. Unlike conventional color printers, which place



red dots next to yellow dots to create the illusion of orange, our process literally mixes the colors to create real orange. Or purple. Or tons of other colors. All at a faster print speed. Visit us at www.hp.com/go/colorlayering to learn absolutely everything there is to know about our award-winning color inkjet printers.

MONEY

Shhh! Over here. Wonder why your favorite portfolio holding just fell through the floor—as it simultaneously reported higher-than-expected profits? Maybe it couldn't beat the "whisper number," the updated earnings-per-share estimate that Wall Street stock analysts quietly pass along to their brokerage clients on the eve of an earnings announcement. **EARNINGS WHISPERS.COM** [www.earningswhispers.com] offers free whisper forecasts for nearly 4,000 companies, typically during the two or three weeks before an



earnings announcement. Hmmm. Sometimes it's not rude to whisper, after all. —D.F.

ON CAMPUS

If you can get Tom Wolfe's latest novel on the Web, why shouldn't college kids be able to buy their high-priced tomes online, too? **VARSITY-BOOKS.COM** [www.varsitybooks.com] answers the call to become the Amazon.com of academe, selling textbooks at 15 percent to 40 percent off cover prices. Though the service's list of institutions features a small start-up group of 58 schools, you can still compare your list with Varsity's inventory and see if there's a match. What's more, the site expects to carry books for 150 to 200 schools by the 1999 fall semester. Finding *The Feynman Lectures on Physics* has never been easier. —C.P.



BUSINESS

Can Small Business Bank on the Web?

Online banking services court consumers, not small-business owners. Feeling somewhat left in the lurch by this, entrepreneur/consultant Barry Star created **BOSTON FINANCIAL NETWORK** [www.bostonfinancialnetwork.com]. BFN provides small businesses with banking, accounting, retirement-plan, and payroll services—all under one virtual roof, around the clock and seven days a week. Star says that in addition to offering convenience, using the Net has meant low overhead, and that lets him pass along savings to his customers. Indeed, BFN's payroll, electronic-bill-payment, and other fees are 10 percent to 20 percent lower than those of conventional off-line services, and the firm pays interest on checking accounts. These benefits, though, might not add up favorably for all small businesses, says online financial-services expert Julio Gomez, cofounder of Gomez Advisors. Lawyers, for example, might benefit more from its remote financial services than would bakeries, bars, and other cash-based retailers, which Gomez says are probably better served by a local, more accessible institution. But if you don't need a night-deposit box for your sacks full of cash, BFN may be your money-management solution. —D.F.



search results	
VILLE 'ER UP	
Pleasantville	9,922
The Road to Wellville	759
Hooterville	740
'59 Coupe de Ville	413



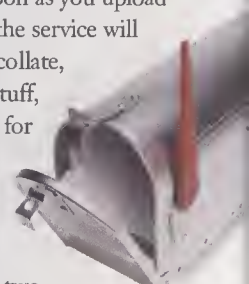
MEDIA

Too busy to read *The Wall Street Journal*? Try listening to its sterling prose with an **AUDIBLE** portable audio player (\$199). A \$6.95-per-month *Journal* subscription lets you download 30 minutes of selected audio content from the Audible Web site [www.audible.com]. True, it all can add up to more than the cost of a print subscription, but how smart an investment is that paper hiding in your briefcase? Also expected soon: *The New York Times*, in "all the news that's fit to speak" format. —D.F.



BUSINESS

Mailing labels, schmailing labels. Those laser-printed wonders don't get to the mailbox by themselves, do they? However, a letter you mass-mail via the U.S. Postal Service's Mailing Online site at **POSTOFFICE ONLINE** [www.postofficeonline.com/POLPublic20/Survey/NewUser.asp] leaves your hands as soon as you upload it. In fact, the service will duplicate, collate, envelope-stuff, and mail it for you—no more lugging bundles to the mailbox. A two-page letter to 200 recipients via first-class mail costs \$77.40—less expensive than hiring a temp to do the job. This pilot program, now being tested in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Tampa, will roll out nationwide by midsummer. —C.P.



Wherever You
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You Can Use
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ImageDeck by MICROTEK is the first *Stand-Alone Scanning Appliance™* for scanning photos or documents — *without a computer connection!*

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YAHOO YENTA

WRITE YENTA AT CLICK@ZD.COM



Dear Yenta,
After many late nights, I finally put up my own Web site. On one page, I've posted photos of all my old boyfriends—with links to their own Web sites! I thought this was a great idea, but one of my former flames is upset. He says I must remove the link. Is he right?

—Slighted in Seattle

Dear Slighted,
Your agitated ex-lover can ask you to remove the link, but he can't *make* you do it. Still, rules of common etiquette apply. What if you painted your house purple and built a yellow-brick path leading to your next-door neighbor's property line—and she complained? If you were any kind of a *mensch*,* you would fix the situation! What's more, I've been to your site. Who knew it was a very handsome, married member of the House Judiciary Committee doing the complaining? Fear not! Your Web address and his secret are *entre nous*.**

mensch* (Yiddish): a person of integrity or honor; *entre nous* (French): between us

EXTREEMELY SPECIALIZED SITES

A FIRST-TIMER'S GUIDE TO JINGLE COLLECTING
freespace.virgin.net/david.hemsley1/collectors.htm

ABOUT GEYSERS...
www2.wku.edu/www/geoweb/geyser/about2.html

THE PARASITIC PLANT CONNECTION
www.science.siu.edu/parasitic-plants

FIELD GUIDE TO FRESHWATER MUSSELS OF THE MIDWEST
www.inhs.uiuc.edu/chf/pub/mussel_man/cover.html



H O M E G R O W N H O T L I S T

Y-LIFE PRESENTS NOTABLE PERSONAL PAGES ON OUR RADAR THIS MONTH



FANDOM WAR GAMES

The concept of a sitcom set in a World War II prisoner-of-war camp seemed odd on paper, but it worked on the small screen for six seasons. There's plenty of time to check out John Franklin's unofficial *HOGAN'S HEROES* fan site before Mel Gibson's cinematic interpretation of this men-in-prison farce (release date pending) hits theaters. [www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Set/6405]

CASHING IN

Johnny Cash superfan Mike Horan created this site "one piece at a time," in homage to his idol in black. To that end, **THE MUSIC OF JOHNNY CASH** includes a quote-filled scrapbook and vintage pictures. Grab a boy named Sue, and take a look. [maninblack.net]



HISTORY GET STONED

Christiaan Stoudt, a special-effects artist based in Hollywood, decided those mystical "big rocks" at Stonehenge didn't need any enhancement at all. Instead, he simply displays stunning photographs of this mystical site, along with a rock-solid history. [home.earthlink.net/~shadowfax]

SIBLING RIVALRY?

The saga of Christopher Columbus's New World getaway is thoroughly old hat. But Columbus fan Keith A. Pickering's **COLUMBUS NAVIGATION HOME PAGE** gives the tale some new twists—including such details as those about Bartholomew Columbus, his hitherto unknown brother. Hi, Bart! [www1.minn.net/~keithp] —M.F.

LABORS OF LOVE

YAHOO! CREATORS JERRY YANG AND DAVID FILO SELECT A SITE BUILT WITH TRUE PASSION

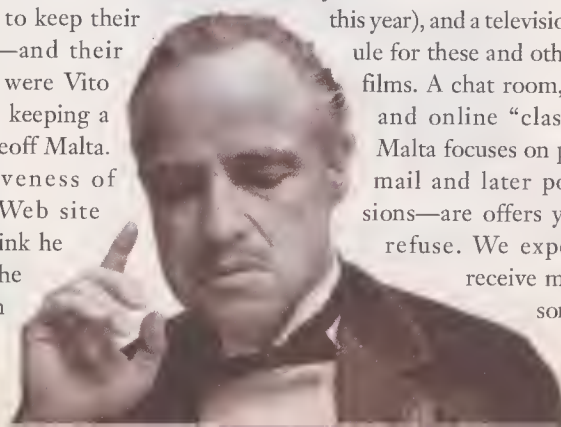
Fun for the Whole "Family"

THE GODFATHER TRILOGY

[www.jgeoff.com/godfathr.html]

The *Godfather's* infamous Corleone family learned to keep their friends close—and their enemies closer. And were Vito still with us, he'd be keeping a watchful eye on J. Geoff Malta. The comprehensiveness of Malta's *Godfather* Web site might lead one to think he was, indeed, part of "the family." Created in

1995, Malta's pages include a summary and press pictures of each of the epic series' entries (*Godfather II* celebrates its 25th anniversary this year), and a television viewing schedule for these and other Mafia-related films. A chat room, message board, and online "classes"—in which Malta focuses on plot points via e-mail and later posts the discussions—are offers you simply can't refuse. We expect this site to receive many, uh, hits for some time to come.



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS



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MYAHC99



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YAHOO!
WRITE YENTA AT CLIC



Dear Yen
After ma
nights, I
my own We
one page, I've posted p
my old boyfriends—wi
their own Web sites! I
was a great idea, but o
mer flames is upset. H
remove the link. Is he
—Slight

Dear Slighted,
Your agitated ex-lover
you to remove the lin
can't *make* you do it.
common etiquette ap
you painted your house purple
and built a yellow-brick path lead-
ing to your next-door neighbor's
property line—and she com-
plained? If you were any kind of a
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geyser/about2.html

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**FIELD GUIDE TO FRESHWATER
MUSSELS OF THE MIDWEST**
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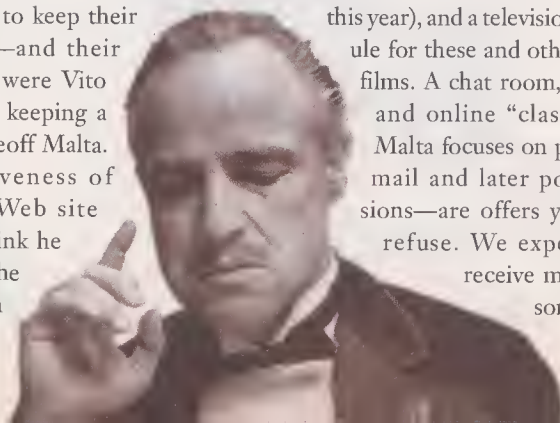
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[www.jgeoff.com/godfathr.html]

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refuse. We expect this site to
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some time to come.



AWIDE WORLD PHOTOS



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THE PLAYERS

MULTIPLAYER PICKS

The five most popular game titles at GameStorm.

1 AIR WARRIOR III

2 Legends of Kesmai

3 Rolemaster: MageStorm

4 Multiplayer BattleTech: Solaris

5 Casino Poker

Rankings reflect December traffic at www.gamesstorm.com.



ROGUE SQUADRON

TOP DEMOS

Happy Puppy's most popular tryouts.

1 STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON

2 Motoracer 2

3 Aliens vs. Predator

4 Thief: The Dark Project

5 Deer Avenger

December downloads at www.happypuppy.com



SUE NOYES

She's shaken—and stirred—by Quake on Heat.net

[www.heat.net].

VITALS: 36-year-old payroll manager from Belmont, New Hampshire

FAVORITE ONLINE GAMES: Quake and Quake2, Plane Crazy, Net Fighter

HOW OFTEN DO YOU PLAY?

Probably about 20 hours a week, though my husband might disagree with that estimate.

WHAT WOULD OTHER PLAYERS

SAY ABOUT YOU? "She wasn't the best fragger on the block, but she loved to play and always had something funny to say." Why? Is someone putting a hit out on me?

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR OFF-LINE

FUN? I'm a big Winston Cup [car-racing] fan, and I also dig camping and photography.

"Winging" It to the Big Screen



ON THE WING SET

Who'll play Lara Croft in the movie version of Tomb Raider? Can Hollywood get Duke Nukem 3D right? As gamers buzz about these long-awaited game-to-movie projects, **WING COMMANDER** [www.wcmovie.com] is being readied for its release. Based on Origin's space-combat series of the

same name, the film stars Freddie Prinze Jr. and Matthew Lillard in the story of an interstellar battle with the malevolent Kilrathis. Smartly, the film's top brass chose to meld both video-game and cinematic expertise. Chris Roberts, the game's creator and lead designer, directs, with *Titanic* alumnus and Academy Award nominee Peter Lamont handling production design. So if *Wing* succeeds, how long before we see *Doom: The Movie*? Not so fast. Roberts emphasizes that a successful game series does not a film make: "*Wing Commander* works because the emphasis has always been on story and on character.... Plus, the games were inspired by both sci-fi and classic World War II films." —M.S.

GAMING ROUNDUP

GAMESLICE

They may not be as steamy as the offices of *Ally McBeal*, but the studios and cubicles of game-publishing companies also have their stories to tell. Experience the blood, sweat, and Pepsi of creating a top-notch game at **GAMESLICE**. Interviews with writers, animators, and other honchos are only part of this free backstage pass. [www.gameslice.com]

TEAM FORTRESS II

This multiplayer stand-alone action game is a spin-off of *Half-Life* (you know, the same way *All in the Family* begat *Maude*). Now the faithful can log on to join or create a team, then choose from a list of nine "classes," each with its own goals, methods, and special weapons. Co-op mission objectives range from the traditional "capture-the-flag" styles of play to spy scenarios and beyond, including highly detailed quests similar to those found in role-playing strategy games. *Sierra Studios*; \$29.95; PC only [www.sierrastudios.com/games/teamfortress]

MYSTERYNET.COM

If even the mysterious machinations of government scandals haven't sated your appetite for intrigue, consider paying a visit to **MYSTERYNET.COM**. Its lineup of interactive mysteries includes Vote-n-Solve, a daily whodunit game, plus soap operas and horror stories. Also, junior sleuths can link out to The Case.com for Kids to join that most wholesome of role models, Nancy Drew, on her latest mission. Free [www.mysterynet.com]

JUST THE GAMEFAQs, MA'AM

You never keep the documentation, do you? Fear not. When you need tech support or a cheat code for your favorite game, get the help you need from one of

GAMEFAQs' "frequently asked questions" files. Thousands of games are represented here, from *Arkanoid* to *Zork*.

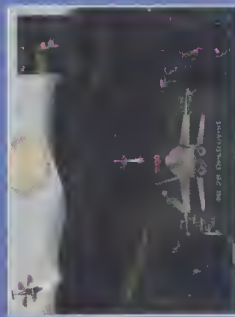
Search by platform or genre, or drop a keyword into its search-engine form. [www.gamefaqs.com]

—M.S.



NANCY DREW

INSTANT GRATIFICATION!



Kick the tires, fight the fires and go! You're Maverick, defending your country and your honor in TOP GUN: HORNET'S NEST, the action-packed, pulse-pounding air-combat game. Dogfight, bomb and maneuver your way through 3D blistering, white-knuckle missions in extreme 3-D environments. Don't waste time learning commands—waste enemies! You're Maverick. Go get 'em, hotshot!

TOP GUN

HORNET'S NEST™

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MICRO PROSE
www.microprose.com

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YAHOO! INTERNET LIVE

WHEN & WHERE ON THE WEB

A Y-Life sampler of lively Net events.
Daily updates at www.ylives.com

Times are Eastern.

SUNDAYS

8 P.M.

Simpsons Chat

Watch the show on TV as you type with fellow fans.

www.ultimatetv.com/interact/chat/rooms/simpsons.html

9 P.M.

Walden

Discuss spirituality, Thoreau-ly.

www.talkcity.com/calendar/events/event680.html

MONDAYS

2 P.M.

The Prescription

An expert smorgasbord of sports gambling information and advice.

www.sportsworld.com/gambling/shrink.stm

8 P.M.

Rock n' Roll Insider Chat

SonicNet editors answer your questions and chat with guest artists.

chat.yahoo.com

9 P.M.

Victoria Magazine Readers

Join the conversation in this all-purpose women's travel, beauty, and community forum.

www.talkcity.com/calendar/events/event2619.html

10 P.M.

The World of Theme Parks

Swap your thoughts about the world's best rides and parks.

expedia.msn.com/forums/theme/chatroom.htm

TUESDAYS

4 P.M.

Food & Wine Chat

The online arm of this popular cuisine magazine.

www.pathfinder.com/FoodWine/webcast/sked.html



8 P.M.

Parenttime

Deb Sheehan helps alleviate some of parenting's travails.

chat.yahoo.com

11 P.M.

What if?

What if you won \$1,000,000?

The best responses win prizes.
chat01.asylum.com/studio-i/reoccurring_schedule.html



U P & C O M I N G

MUSIC

Whether or not you respect the annual Grammy Awards selections, it's always fun to find out who's getting attention this year from the music industry's elder statesmen. Visit the **41ST ANNUAL GRAMMY AWARDS** site [www.grammy.com] to read pre- and postevent news and learn more about the nomination process (more than 10,000 people vote) for the event, which is to be held on February 24. But you'll have to go to such entertainment sites as E! Online and Music Central to research past winners....One of the music business's more enduring one-named chanteuses, **CHER**, just can't leave the lime-light: Her recent single, "Believe," from the album of the same name, has become an international hit even as she also releases a new book (*The First Time*) and launches a Web site [www.cher.com]. Look to the latter for downloadable song clips, videos, photographs, and various other items of Cheraphernalia, including incense, jewelry, and the distinctive Cher-Wear clothing line.

CHER

FILM

Where did Mark Wahlberg go in the days after *Boogie Nights*? He's become an idealistic New York cop in **THE CORRUPTOR**, a big-budget, Hong Kong-style flick starring Chow Yun-Fat as his morally bankrupt superior. Find out what Wahlberg and Yun-Fat really think about law enforcement and the movies at the film's official site [www.corruptor.com], which also hosts an interactive novel. —J.O.C.

ART

That Great Wall around China seems a bit smaller now, thanks to **NEW CHINESE ART: INSIDE OUT**, from the New York-based Asia Society [www.asiasociety.org/arts/insideout]. Read bios of noted Chinese artists; view a 20-year time line of notable events in the Chinese, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong art communities; and see video clips of works in progress.



YAHOO! INTERNET LIVE

WHEN & WHERE ON THE WEB

WEDNESDAYS

8 P.M.

Ask the Pros Chat

Interviews with racing celebrities and other automobile pros.

www.gmgoodwrench.com/pros/schedulemain.htm

Caribbean Travel Chat

Sit back and sip tropical drinks with fellow travelers.

expedia.msn.com/forums/caribb/chatroom.htm

THURSDAYS

8:30 P.M.

Rock & Roll Hangover

A trip to rock's gritty underbelly.

static.pseudo.com/hangover

FRIDAYS

1 P.M.

Live X

Live folk and rock performances found here.

www.audionet.com/music/shows/livex

MIDNIGHT

EA Pajama Party

Late-night movie gossip.

chat01.asylum.com/studio-i/reoccurring_schedule.html



SATURDAYS

9 A.M.

Hooked on Fishing with

Brian Hoffman

Chat rods and reels in the a.m.

www.broadcast.com/radio/sports/kntr

1 P.M.

FitNet

Meet your personal trainers on the Web.

www.broadcast.com/sports/shows/fitnet

10 P.M.

Snapshots to Photograph

Q&A for shutterbugs.
worldwithoutborders.com/calendar/snap.shtml

WEEKDAYS

NOON

Rush Room

Talk back to Rush Limbaugh during one of his live broadcasts.

www.talkcity.com/calendar/events/event31.html

4 P.M.

The Best of the Blues

Featuring "King Ro"

An hour of blues from

Solid Gold Soul.

www.broadcast.com/radio/shows/kingro

—R.M.

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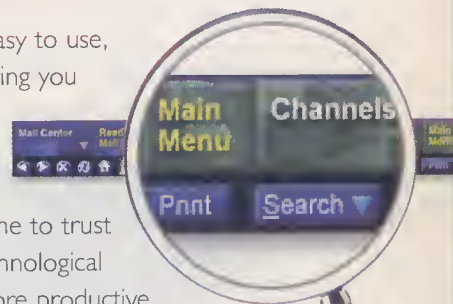
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SUBARU 

presents

The Active Internet

your official web guide to

Backcountry



If you've got the winter blues, you don't have to go to Jamaica to shake them. In fact, a good way to get rid of the blahs is to dive right into the winter white by cross country skiing or snowshoeing. You'll see more than you would skiing downhill, and it's a great workout, for XC skiing and snowshoeing are two of the best aerobic sports around. But before you go, check out some of the outstanding snow sites on the web—they'll make planning your trip easier and more enjoyable.

A great place to start is the Cross Country Ski Areas Association's *NORDIC, CROSS COUNTRY AND SNOWSHOEING INFORMATION CENTER* (www.xcski.org). Begin by checking out CCSAA's listings of resorts, indexed by region and state, with detailed descriptions of trails, facilities, and rentals. It also showcases extensive resources for cross-country and snowshoe gear, snow reports, and ski travel tours. *CROSS COUNTRY SKI WORLD* (www.xcskiworld.com), a personal home page edited by J.D. Downing, is a labor of love. It covers the world of XC skiing thoroughly—from a helpful FAQ page for beginners to tips on technique, from equipment and accessories to competitive skiing news, and from recommended ski areas and resorts to related web links. Here, for instance, you can read about the Royal Gorge Ski Resort, nestled in the California's magnificent Sierra Nevadas near Lake Tahoe. The largest XC ski resort in North America, it offers more than 300 kilometers of trails, with open meadows, stunning vistas, and the nearby Yuba River. Après ski, sample the French food and a glass of



wine at the Wilderness Lodge.

Several regional sites offer help in planning trips: *CROSS COUNTRY SKIING IN NEW ENGLAND* (www.nexcski.com/) with info on lodging, retail stores, and ski conditions; *NORDIC SKIING TRAILS IN NEW YORK* (www.gorp.com/gorp/location/ny/ski-nord.htm) with details on exploring the pristine forests of the Adirondacks to the best XC areas of the Catskills, just a hop, skip, and glide away from the Big Apple; and *THE GREAT LAKES NORDIC SKI COUNCIL* (www.skinordic.org), which covers a large part of the Midwest.

GOSKI, a megasite that deals primarily with downhill skiing, has a nicely laid out XC section (www.goski.com/xc.htm) offering links to national and international cross-country/Nordic resources as well as a deep database on skiing news, resorts, gear, weather—you name it. XC resorts and trails can be accessed through its cross country section or by state or region. By clicking on Vermont, for example, you can check out the von Trapp Family Lodge in Stowe—owned by the von Trapps, of *Sound of Music* fame—with its hundred kilometers of trails (60 of them groomed). *ON-THE-SNOW AMI* (www.aminews.com/crosscountry/) has a nifty XC section with frequently updated snow reports from many resorts, all delivered in a very pleasant, easy-on-the-eyes chart. It features resort packages, vacation rentals, weather reports, and gear as well.

And to find out how Subaru can help you enter the world of cross-country skiing, visit www.subaru.com.



Archaeologists tell us that evidence of snowshoes goes back at least 6,000 years, when central Asians used short planks to walk on snow. Later, bent wood and woven hide did the trick, and these days aluminum and nylon shoes walk the walk. Recreational snowshoeing first became popular around the turn of the century, and now it's one of the fastest growing winter sports. *SNOWSHOE CENTRAL* (www.svidaho.com/snowshoeing) is so beautifully designed it's guaranteed to get you jazzed about the sport. With its magical winterscape photography and comprehensive info on techniques, history, manufacturers, resorts, trails, outfitters, safety and first aid, your feet will itch with anticipation. *THE LIGHT-WEIGHT BACKPACKER* has a savvy section on snowshoeing and winter hiking (www.backpacking.net/winter.html) with tips on general preparedness for winter conditions. *THE ATLAS SNOWSHOE COMPANY* (www.atlasworld.com/frame1_sport.html), one of the best snowshoe manufacturers, has a plain vanilla but very helpful site, where you can learn about technique, places to go, and competitions, including the annual Ben & Jerry's Snowshoe Romps (cosponsored by Atlas) at various locations around the U.S.

Please respect the environment when you go off-road. The ABC's of Safety: Air bags. Buckle up. Children in back. Outback Sport shown with optional equipment.

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remote point and see for yourself. One's bound to venture by soon.

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LISTS & STATS

TOP LIVE EVENTS

The month's most heavily attended events at broadcast.com.

WWW.BROADCAST.COM

- 1 Paul McCartney's "Wide Prairie" Event, concert [12/17]



- 2 ▲ *Casablanca*, streaming video broadcast by Turner Classic Movies [12/22]
- 3 Duran Duran, concert [12/19]
- 4 Rod Stewart, concert [12/12]
- 5 A&E "Live by Request" with Tony Bennett [12/7]

Rankings reflect December traffic patterns.

TOP CHATS

The month's best-attended get-togethers at America Online.

KEYWORD: LIVE

- 1 House of Representatives Impeachment Vote, discussion [12/19]
- 2 Live Coverage of Military Strikes in Iraq, discussion [12/16]
- 3 Impeachment Hearings, discussion [12/18]
- 4 Impeachment Hearings with AOL Radio, listener discussion [12/8]
- 5 Judiciary Committee Hearings, discussion [12/11]
- 6 Judiciary Committee Hearings, discussion [12/9]
- 7 *Star Trek: Insurrection*, marathon chat [12/8]
- 8 Elton John and Billie Jean King [12/10]
- 9 Rosie O'Donnell's *You've Got Mail* Day [12/9]
- 10 Jewel [12/15]

Rankings reflect December chat attendance.

WHAT YOU'RE SEARCHING FOR

The search words posting the largest gains in usage this month at MetaCrawler.

WWW.METACRAWLER.COM

- 1 "squadron" [Rogue Squadron, video game]
- 2 "rogue" [Squadron]
- 3 "turok" [video game]
- 4 "claus" [Santa]
- 5 "half-life" [video game]
- 6 "gift" [Christmas]
- 7 "mod" [sound file]
- 8 "years" [New...Eve]
- 9 "bowl" [college football]
- 10 "half" [Life]

MetaCrawler searches AltaVista, Excite, Infoseek, Lycos, WebCrawler, and Yahoo! simultaneously. Rankings reflect December data.

T H E S I T E S

WEB TOPPERS

The most popular sites among Web surfers.

WHERE'S THE BUZZ?

The most-visited news/info/entertainment sites.

Media Metrix

SITE	REACH (% OF WEB POP)	SITE	REACH (% OF WEB POP)
1 AOL.com	48.7	1 ZDNet	10.8
2 Yahoo!	47.0	2 Disney Online	8.6
3 MSN	32.7	3 MSNBC.com	8.3
4 GeoCities	32.0	4 The Mining Co.	7.5
5 Netscape	29.9	5 ESPN.com	7.2
6 Excite	25.1	6 Pathfinder	7.2
7 Lycos	23.2	7 CNN Interactive	7.0
8 Microsoft	22.9	8 The Weather Channel	7.0
9 Infoseek	19.3	9 Sony Online	6.3
10 AltaVista	19.2	10 ABCNews.com	5.7
11 Tripod	18.5	11 DigitalCity	5.3
12 Angelfire	16.8	12 Warner Bros. Online	5.2
13 Hotmail	16.7	13 USA Today	4.7
14 Blue Mountain Arts	16.0	14 CNET	4.5
15 Xoom.com	14.6	15 iVillage.com	4.4

Media Metrix (www.mediametrix.com), which last year merged with RelevantKnowledge, measures the preferences of 30,000 Net surfers. Rankings reflect November data, the latest available at press time. Apparent ties in the rankings are the result of rounding.

BOOKS

AMAZON.COM

The top-selling hardcover fiction titles at Amazon.com.

- 1 *The Emperor's New Clothes: An All-Star Retelling*, Andersen
- 2 *A Man in Full*, Wolfe
- 3 *Charming Billy*, McDermott
- 4 *The Poisonwood Bible*, Kingsolver
- 5 *The Simple Truth*, Baldacci
- 6 *Bag of Bones*, King
- 7 *Rainbow Six*, Clancy
- 8 *Memoirs of a Geisha*, Golden
- 9 *I Know This Much Is True*, Lamb
- 10 *The Vampire Armand*, Rice

List represents the week ending 1/5/99.

COMPACT DISCS

CDNOW.COM

The top-selling titles at Cdnw.

- 1 *The Best of 1980-1990* [Limited Edition], U2
- 2 *Spirit*, Jewel
- 3 *Garage Inc.*, Metallica
- 4 *Supposed Former Infatuation Junkie*, Alanis Morissette
- 5 *Double Live*, Garth Brooks
- 6 *Americana*, Offspring
- 7 *These Are Special Times*, Celine Dion
- 8 *No. 1's*, Mariah Carey
- 9 *Live on Two Legs*, Pearl Jam
- 10 *Stunt*, Barenaked Ladies

List represents the month of December.

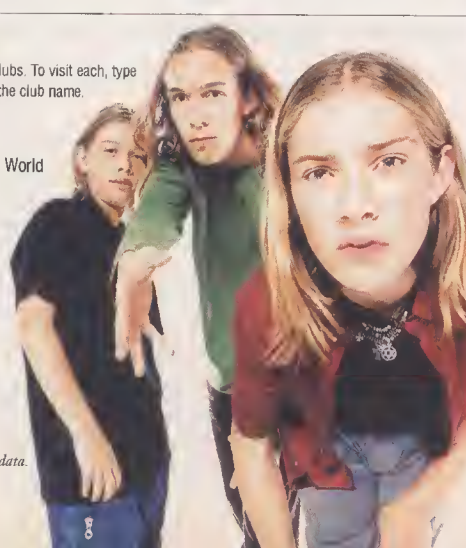
TOP CLUBS

The most popular Yahoo! clubs. To visit each, type clubs.yahoo.com and then the club name.

CLUBS.YAHOO.COM

- 1 Hanson
- 2 Penpals Around the World
- 3 Real Time Strategy
- 4 Day Traders
- 5 A Pen Pal Club
- 6 California Love Lounge
- 7 Rendezvous
- 8 Ultimate Veggie Tales
- 9 Jock Boys Only Hangout
- 10 Cheat Code Central

Rankings reflect December data.



LISTS & STATS

TOP NEWSGROUPS

The most active newsgroups as measured by Deja News.

WWW.DEJANEWS.COM

- 1 alt.video.dvd
- 2 alt.sex.stories
- 3 alt.home-theater.misc
- 4 rec.arts.movies
- 5 alt.comp.periphs

Rankings reflect December data.

TOP RECIPES

The month's most popular recipe requests at StarChefs.

WWW.STARCHIEFS.COM

- 1 Japanese Noodles with Shiitake and Sesame, Mark Bittman
- 2 Cuban Mojo Marinated and Grilled Chicken, Norman VanAken
- 3 Jiffy Pop Firecracker Shrimp, Emeril Lagasse
- 4 Carrot and Parsnip Latkes, Joan Nathan
- 5 Warm Seafood and White Bean Salad, Michael Romano

Rankings reflect December requests.

netpoll

HILL AND LIDDY: THE BATTLE ROYALE

Q: Who would make a better president?

- Elizabeth Dole 69%
- Hillary Rodham Clinton 31%

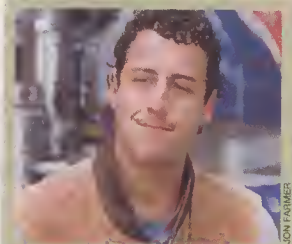
Rankings reflect responses of 30,157 voters at ABCNews.com on January 5, 1999.

THE WEB'S CELEBS

The most-searched celebrities recently on the big screen.

WWW.HOTBOT.COM

- 1 Sandra Bullock
(The Prince of Egypt)



- 2 Adam Sandler (The Waterboy) ▲
- 3 Meg Ryan (You've Got Mail)
- 4 Will Smith (Enemy of the State)
- 5 Anne Heche (Psycho)
- 6 Kelly Preston (Jack Frost)
- 7 Michelle Pfeiffer (The Prince of Egypt)
- 8 Tom Hanks (You've Got Mail)
- 9 Patrick Stewart (Star Trek: Insurrection)
- 10 Cate Blanchett (Elizabeth)

Rankings reflect December search queries.



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WISH LIST

OUR RESIDENT NET UTOPIAN'S NOT-SO-MODEST PROPOSALS

BY MARK GLASER

[1] VIRTUAL SPRING BREAK In college, the ritual was brewskis and partying on the beach. Now, if you're stuck in the office, this virtual-reality program lets you don headgear and "see" the waves, "hear" party sounds, "smell" the sand, and "feel" a nasty hangover.

[2] DARTHNET. Can't wait for a cable modem to get speedier Net access? This fleet of "Death Star" satellites blankets the globe with high-speed access at only \$15 per month. Each time you get e-mail, a wheezy, disembodied voice says, "You've Got Leia."

[3] STAR TREK HYPE FILTER This browser plug-in boldly goes where all Trekkies have gone before, as it purges ubiquitous Trekkie jargon, inside jokes, and tacky metaphors from Web content. Surf long and prosper.

[4] PENTIUM III.5: ANDY'S REVENGE. It's a turbocharged, next-generation microprocessor, guaranteed to speed up Net surfing and computer games, while also powering Macintoshes, the BMW "5" series, and the secret weapon in the next James Bond movie.

Mark Glaser is a San Francisco-based freelance writer, critic, and frustrated inventor. Send him your own wishes at glaze@sprintmail.com.

search results

EESE-Y DOES IT

John Cleese	6,177
Mason Reese	68
Edwin Meese	1,144
Performance Fleece	8



FOTO FANTASIES

y i p p e e !



ya-hooey!

FEWER HASSLES AT TAX TIME

More than 20 percent of U.S. taxpayers filed their returns electronically in 1998; by 2007, the IRS wants that number to approach 80 percent. For the here and now, such software publishers as Intuit (with its TurboTax 1998) and Block (Kiplinger TaxCut 98) are planning to cut online-filing charges to as little as \$10 in some promotions. Not very taxing at all.

MEET THE REAL STARS

Everyone's a Copernicus since Case Western Reserve University introduced the world's largest online telescope. Surfers submit an online image-request form, and get digital snapshots delivered the next day. No, you can't point it at your neighbor's window. [astrwww.astr.cwru.edu/Nassau/nassau.html]

OLD DOGS, NEW TRICKS ▶

What happens when a middlebrow pop-music purveyor (K-Tel) aligns with the most reputable soft-porn-and-articles title (*Playboy*)? Answer: Something surprisingly wholesome and good. The duo's 250,000-title music store at **PLAYBOY ONLINE** [www.playboy.com] also hawks custom-CD mixes. Does that mean we can get "The Bunny Hop"?



MALL.COM

Americans love their malls—even though many of them are factories for crime statistics and havens for slacking teens. So do we need them online, too? Saving gas by putting 178 stores in one place is an arguably noble effort. But if you're too lazy to save a few bookmarks and click around a bit, you've got a bigger problem.

"HEY! LEMME OUTTA HERE!"

Not that *you* would ever go to a porn site on purpose, but can you imagine the horror of not being allowed to leave such a den of iniquity once you were, uh, done? Hit your browser's Back button at some less reputable sites, and you will simply get dumped into one of its partner sites. Hit Back again, and you're on the move, finally—to yet another porn site. Close the browser window, and it'll happen again when you restart. Eventually, this "kidnapping" will cease, but it's still an even sleazier stunt than any you'll see during your covert surfing session.

FRANK BEZGLOSE

SITE GAG

BY MICK STEVENS



"MAYBE SADDAM DOESN'T HAVE AN E-MAIL ADDRESS!"

MICK STEVENS © 1998 FROM THE CARTOON BANK. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

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(www.chicksdigus.com)



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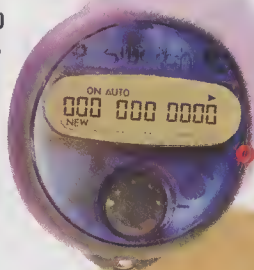
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877-839-5223
www.swatch.com



EIGHTIES CHIC SWATCH THE BEEP BOX

Men at Work and parachute pants vanished in the mid-'80s, but the Swatch watch keeps on ticking. The latest Swatches, called Beep Boxes, come in the manufacturer's funky neons and provide basic alphanumeric paging. With every Beep Box, users get a dedicated 800-number, a pager bungee cord and holster, and total access to the Swatch Web site (where users can send and receive pager beeps).

JOINED AT THE IP TRAPEZE/ACCENT

As a unit, the Trapeze PCS digital cellular phone and the Accent smartphone add-on perform wireless-communication acrobatics. The devices provide mobile users with faxing capabilities and Web and e-mail access. The Accent/Trapeze smart phone (with stylus) also functions as a personal digital assistant (PDA) and comes loaded with phone-book, calendar, and organizer software. Data can be transferred to and from your 5.64-ounce PDA via an infrared port or serial-cable connection.

Trapeze/Accent, \$449
Philips Consumer Communications
800-659-0817
www.philipsconsumer.com



DOUBLE VISION PLANUS 30-INCH WIDE- SCREEN TABLETOP DIGITAL TV

This 30-inch dream screen offers spectacularly sharp picture quality (with 480-line progressive scanning) and comes equipped with a 16:9-format picture tube for cinematic wide-screen viewing. Loewe, a German digital-TV manufacturer, also added a VGA input to the set so that it can connect to your computer and double as a colossal monitor. A little over the top for everyday computing? Yes, but it sure is easy on the eyes.



Planus 30-inch Wide-Screen
Tabletop Digital TV, \$3,800
Loewe • 877-563-9388
www.loewetv.com



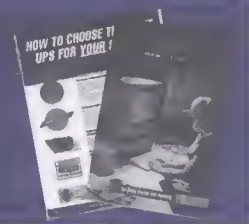
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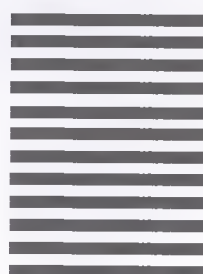
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send and receive pager beeps).

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www.fonecam.com

REMOTE CONTROL FONECAM

Ah, yes, the ubiquitous Webcam. It's everywhere nowadays, capturing fascinating still images of everything from office coffee pots to dorm-room antics to plates of decaying Spam. Have intentions of setting up one of your own? Then check out the pyramid-shaped FoneCam. Unlike other such devices, this digital camera comes equipped with its own internal 14.4Kbps modem—so it can operate with or without a regular serial or universal serial bus connection to your PC. As long as it's hooked up to a standard analog phone line, the FoneCam can snap away and remotely upload images to your Web site.

APPLE JACK ITASK

The iTask was designed specifically with the iMac and its legion of fanatical owners in mind. This snazzy, ergonomically sound console ships in (you guessed it) translucent frost white and Bondi blue, and comes equipped with a foot-operated gas-piston lift that lets users adjust the desktop between sitting and standing positions.

SHAG PAD MOUSERUG

A throw rug for your mouse? Why not? These fun, decorative shags are made up of more than 7 million yarn-dyed nylon fibers and come in five distinct styles: Celtic, Oriental, Persian, Turkish, and Indian flat weave. Each MouseRug is fashioned in the likeness of a real hand-woven rug and maintains all of the unique characteristics and markings of the genuine article.

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EZ user

Simple Answers for Smart People

HOW TO GET THE MOST NET IN THE LEAST TIME



GARY HOVLAND

FIND IT ONLINE

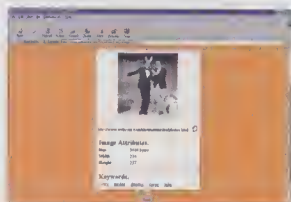
Imagine That: An Image Search Directory

When you type the words *bunny* or *steam* at the **Arriba Vista** Web site [www.arribavista.com], it retrieves, surprisingly, pictures of rabbits and vapor—and not pornographic photos or ads. That's because the clean-as-a-whistle image directory—targeted at families, educators, and researchers—is perpetually filtered for smut. Currently, the site catalogs upward of 1.5 million kid-friendly Web images, and it promises to include an additional 2.5 million by year's end.

To conduct your own Arriba

Vista search, simply enter a keyword in the site's query field, and hit Return. Search results appear as thumbnail images, which can then be saved to your hard disk or linked to on the Web. The site also offers advanced search options, along with a list of the 50 most prevalent images on the Net.

And what if your search fails to turn up any images? Send a research request to the site via the "Contact Us" link. It's free, and Arriba Vista will e-mail you the results within 24 hours.



Arriba Vista's Web site catalogs more than 1.5 million images.

DEAR SURF GURU

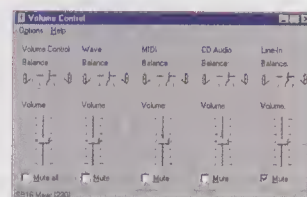
Highlighting Queries; Pumping Up the Volume

I have trouble locating keywords in Web documents and search-engine results. Is there a simple way to find the info I need?

Check out a free search utility called **Express** [express.infoseek.com] from Infoseek. This 10 MB download highlights Web document keywords in yellow. Additionally, Express functions as a great search tool and can query several search engines at the same time. Of course, you can always search for Web page keywords by using your browser's "Find" feature (hit Ctrl and F at the same time).

Can I listen to CDs on my computer's CD player and to sound files from the Internet at the same time? And can I totally shut off my PC CD player or Internet sounds?

Sure—this requires no more than fiddling with your volume controls. In Windows 95 and Windows 98, double-click on the speaker icon in your task bar. This will launch the "Volume Control" panel (pictured at right). Adjust the volume levels under the headings "CD Audio" and "Wave" (which will take care of the Internet sounds). Alternatively, you can check the appropriate "Mute" boxes to silence the CD player or Internet audio files altogether.



I want to send messages to a bunch of friends, but I want their replies to go to a different e-mail address. Is this possible?

Yes, you can change the "Reply to" settings in both Netscape Messenger and Microsoft Outlook Express. Be warned, though: This trick protects neither your identity nor the origin of your e-mail address. In Messenger, click the "Edit" menu and choose "Preferences." In the category "Mail & Groups," click on the heading "Identity." In the "Reply-to address" field, enter a new e-mail address. Click the OK button. In Outlook Express, click the "Tools" menu and choose "Accounts." Click on the "All" tab. Double-click on your mail account, and then click on the "General" tab. In the "Reply address" field, enter a new e-mail address. Click the OK button.

TWO OUT OF THREE NEW BUSINESSES ARE STARTED IN THE HOME...AND HOME WORKERS ALREADY NUMBER MORE THAN 15 MILLION. Source: Fast Company, January 1998, www.fastcompany.com



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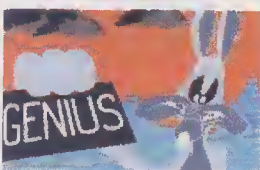
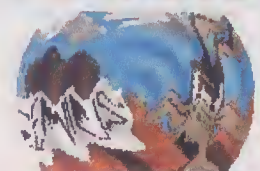
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BROWSER BEAT

Web Design Special Effects

With winter on its way out, now is a good time to give your Web site a digital spring cleaning. But how to give your graphics a new kick? Forget Photoshop, Adobe's software for graphic artists and designers—it costs a bundle and takes weeks or months to learn. Instead, head to **WebFX** [cs.sonom.edu/kendrick/webfx], Bill Kendrick's instantly gratifying graphics tool. It lets you modify Web images with more than 40 visual effects, from swirls and shadows to simple animations. When you come up with a modified image you like, simply save it on your computer and upload it to your site.



WebFX can distort, invert, and border Net images, in a click.

1 First, you'll need the URL of the image you want to modify. If you don't know the URL, go to the site on which the image is located and right-click it (Mac users, click and hold). Select "Copy Image

Location" (or "Copy Shortcut").

2 At the WebFX site, type or paste in the URL. You can modify any image on the Web—your own or someone else's. If you want to use someone else's image on your own site, even in modified form, be sure to get permission.

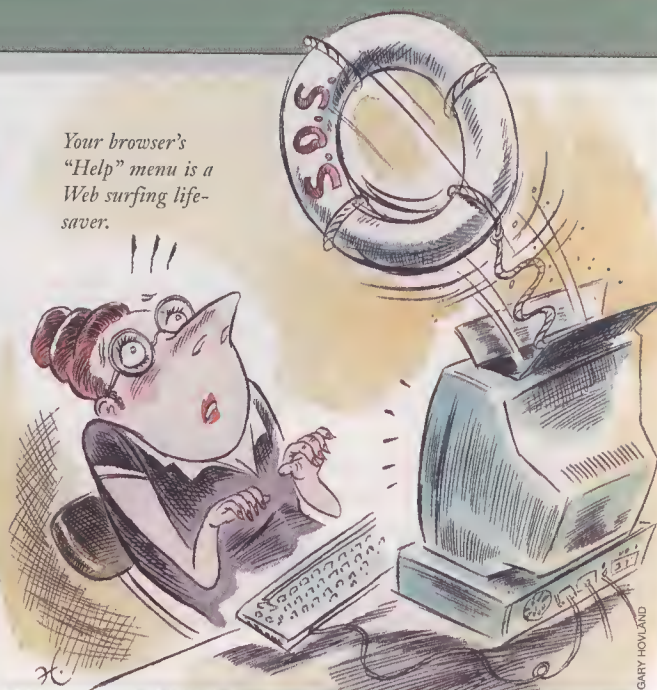
3 Choose an effect from the pull-down list, then click "Apply Effect."

4 Wait a moment, and the modified image will pop up on your screen. To save the new image on your computer, simply right-click it (Mac users, click and hold), and select "Save Image As..." (or "Save Picture As...").

5 Follow your service provider's instructions for uploading images to your Web site.

Feeling more ambitious? You'll find free tips at **Fortress Web Design** [www.jacksonville.net/~tomspeer] and inspiration at **High Five** [www.highfive.com], a design e-zine.

Your browser's "Help" menu is a Web surfing life-saver.



NET REFRESHER

Hidden Browser Handbooks

Accidentally lose your Web site address bar? Having trouble running a Web search? Getting frustrated? Click on the browser's "Help" menu. This underutilized feature connects you to hundreds of browser tips and tricks.

Netscape Navigator 4.0 Click on the "Help" menu and choose "Help Contents." This will launch the "NetHelp Navigator" window. Click on the Index button for a complete list of Navigator browser tips.

Navigator 3.0 Click on the "Help" menu and choose "Handbook."

Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.0 Click on the "Help" menu and choose "Contents" and "Index." This will launch the "Help" window. Click on the "Index" tab for a complete list of browser tips, or on the "Search" tab to find a tip by keyword.

Internet Explorer 3.0 Click on the "Help" menu and choose "Help Topics." This will launch the "Help Topics" window. Click on the "Index" tab for a complete list of browser tips, or on the "Find" tab to search for a tip by keyword.

SECRETS OF THE SERVICE PROVIDERS

America Online

If you save sensitive documents and e-mail in your AOL personal filing cabinet, you may want to password-protect such files against prying eyes. To do this, click "My AOL" and choose "Preferences." Click the Passwords button. Check the "Personal Filing Cabinet" box. Click "OK." Henceforth, AOL will request your password before permitting access to the filing cabinet.

CompuServe

In CompuServe 4.0, users can add new buttons to their tool bars for quick access to member areas. To begin customizing your own tool bar, click the "Access" menu and choose "Preferences." Click the "Toolbar" tab. From the "Available Functions" field, choose a button you'd like to add to the tool bar (e.g., Portfolio). Click the Insert button. Click "OK."



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and Veneers

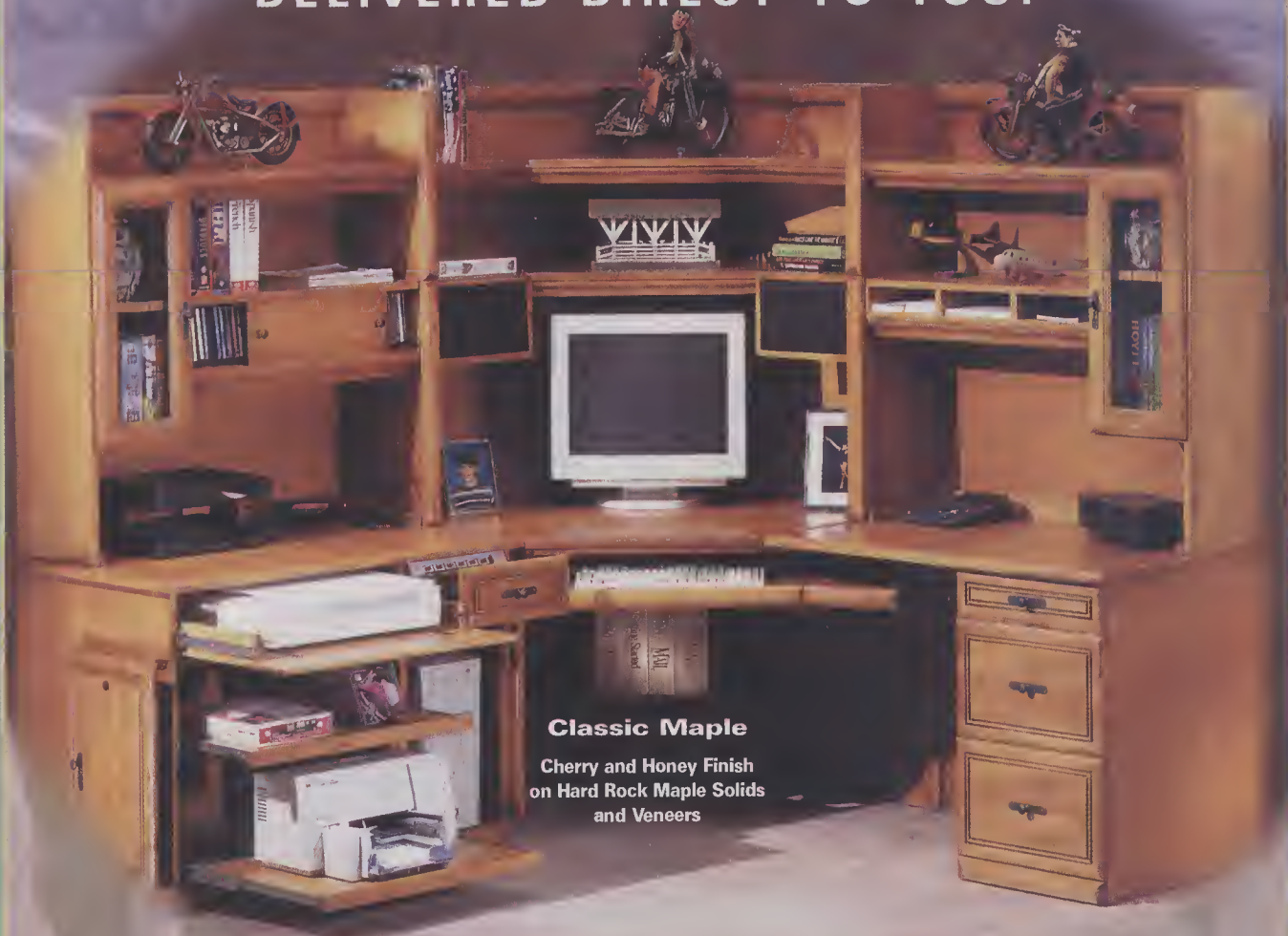
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Another Type Z Personality.



So, I ditch my job in securities and move to the Keys. Start a business building handmade graphite fly rods and brass reels.

My wife? Loves the town. Thinks I'm a little wacky. Wonders where I'll find my customers.

Me? I'm planning to go worldwide the whole time.

I pop into ZDNet. Get some key advice on handling sales tax with interstate customers. Then, I hit the E-Business Channel, and—bam!—I find a total Web storefront solution in about five minutes and four clicks.

Now, I'm reeling in business from all over the world, including my buddies back on the trading floor.

So, I'm thinking I'll take the rest of the day off and do a little fishing myself.

I love it when I get stuff done.

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Type Z (n): A person who embraces change and uses technology to make work—and life—easier. Gets lots done, without looking burdened. Knows a lot, but isn't a know-it-all. Asks good questions; finds answers fast. Uses ZDNet: The High-Tech Hub. (see also: leaders, decision makers, trendsetters)

FIVE E-Z PIECES

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Thanks to an audio-compression technology called .MP3, you can download free, CD-quality tunes from the Net. Below, we provide links to the essential sites and software downloads you'll need to get started listening. But before you do, be forewarned: It's illegal to post, download, or e-mail a copyrighted song to or from the Net without the artist's (or recording company's) written consent. In other words, steer clear of illegally distributed tunes made available at pirate music sites.

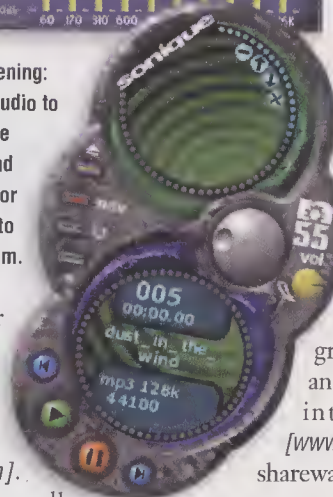
1 FIND TUNES ONLINE

Most commercially released tunes are not freely distributed on the Web. Still, there's a lot to listen to online. Thousands of songwriters with and without recording contracts have gone wired, including the Beastie Boys, Taylor Dayne, Billy Idol, Peter Dinklage, and Kansas. These and other artists' works can be found online at **MP3.com** [www.mp3.com] and **MP3now.com** [www.mp3now.com]. Both sites offer search features, as well as easily navigable directories that are organized by musical genre.

Also, you may want to test out **MP3Leech** [entropy.ezpublishing.com], a nifty PC-only program that can run power Net searches (by artist or song title) for .MP3 files.



Easy listening: Use ZipAudio to record the tunes, and Winamp or Sonique to enjoy them.



2 PLAY .MP3 FILES

To start spinning your new tunes, you'll need to download and install an .MP3 shareware player (a program that functions much the same way a CD player does). We recommend **Winamp** [www.winamp.com], a popular audio player that offers advanced pitch, balance, and amplification controls. **Sonique** [www.sonique.com], another .MP3 player, is also worth a whirl. Apple Macintosh users should download **Mac AMP** [www.macamp.com], a Macintosh-compatible .MP3 player.

3 RECORD CD TRACKS TO PC

As long as you have a CD-ROM drive connected to your computer, you can record CD tracks to your PC. To do this, you'll need a CD ripper/.MP3 encoder, a program capable of compressing and converting your CD tunes into .MP3 files. **ZipAudio** [www.zipaudio.com], an excellent shareware ripper/encoder program, can get you started; however, the shareware version of this product limits the number of tracks you can actually rip from a single CD. For total functionality, you're required to purchase the commercial version of the product (\$49). MP3.com and MP3now.com offer links to alternative ripper/encoders.

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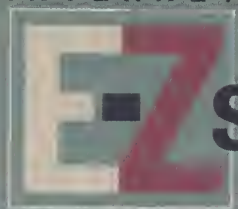
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shopper SMART BUYS FOR BUSY PEOPLE

PICKS OF THE MONTH BY RON BEL BRUNO

A Tisket, a Tasket

1 Tupperware's fine, but these washable mesh baskets are finer. New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art Store—the home of Escher puzzles and miniature designer furniture—offers a different take on storing anything from trail mix to marbles. First you buy a metal-frame base (\$29), then you pick a colored mesh cover to pull over it (\$15).

MoMA Online Store
store.moma.org



Better Homes and Cabins

2 Give Junior the tools to build a house just like the one Lincoln was born in—or the one you slept in at summer camp. These log-cabin-construction sets (\$13.95 and \$22.95) feature wooden parts stained with nontoxic dyes. And notice: no plastic. What would *The Graduate's* Benjamin Braddock say about that?

Back to Basics Toys
www.backtobasicstoy.com

They've Got Your Bag

3 Remember when Louis Vuitton's impregnated-vinyl accoutrements were all the rage? This time the name is Prada, and the items are made of nylon, thank you. Accessories include the Prada bag in its many shapes, sizes, and colors. Pictured here is the scandalously red Scarlatto tote (\$329). This bargain price includes a Prada certificate of authenticity, so you know you're getting *real* Italian nylon. **Bluefly**
www.bluefly.com



ASK THE MAVEN

Q. Where on the Web can I find custom-made clothes?

A. Sources from "across the pond" predict online clothes fittings, made with laser scanners, by about 2001. Computer scientists at London's University College have invented an infrared light scanner that can precisely measure 300,000 points across your body for an absolutely perfect fit. Neat? Yes, and the British government agrees. It's given the project a multimillion-pound research grant. Jolly good.

AT THE AUCTIONS

Who says Peter Frampton's a has-been? Discriminating auction-goers on **eBay** (www.ebay.com) don't think so. Recent bidding on a "factory-sealed" copy of *Frampton Comes Alive*, his 1976 double album, closed at \$29—\$10 above the starting bid. Bonus find: an original 1964 copy of *Meet the Beatles* for \$15.52. Clearly it's the music—not the prices—that may cause some flashbacks.

I CAN BUY WHAT ON THE NET?

◀ It's self-described "cannibal fun for everyone." The Eat Yer Face Gelatin Mold (\$19.95) is your best bet when planning refreshments for a *Lord of the Flies* reading party. What a great present for those in love—with themselves, that is.
www.eatyerface.8m.com



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TOUCHED BY THE NET

BY MATT RICHTEL



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Crying for Justice from Kabul

IN AFGHANISTAN, REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN HAVE TAKEN TO THE WEB IN ORDER TO COMBAT GOVERNMENT OPPRESSION

RAWA www.rawa.org

For what Sohaila Danish and her compatriots have posted on the Internet, they could lose their hands. After all, summary amputation is the sort of punishment readily meted out by Afghanistan's Taliban sect, the fundamentalist Islamic group that controls much of the country.

While the world has focused its humanitarian and media attention on other conflicts, the Taliban regime has quietly earned itself a reputation that would make Pol Pot proud, inflicting on the citizenry extraordinary levels of brutality and oppression. The Taliban has lopped off the hands of petty thieves, killed political opponents, stoned adulterers, and



treated women with particular enmity, restricting their education and attire, and forcing them to live as fifth-class citizens.

Enter the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, a group devoted to fighting for the human rights of the country's people. RAWA has turned the Web into a weapon for social justice. "Our site," says Danish, "is like a dart in the heart of the misogynist Islamic fundamentalists."

That dart has become a primary tool for raising funds and circulating the group's message. In fact, says Danish, the Web is integral to RAWA's success, providing a forum where one hadn't existed previously. "Without the Web, it would have been most difficult for us to make ourselves seen and heard," she explains. "It has had a liberating effect on us."

In calling for the deliverance of Afghan women, the site includes news accounts of Taliban policies and activities. Last year, for example, the Taliban militia stole two vans that had been donated by the Princess Diana Memorial Fund for the purpose of bringing prosthetic devices to children injured by land mines.

Thus, the page urges the United Nations to send a peacekeeping force to Afghanistan, and RAWA strongly advocates a policy of disarming the Islamic fundamentalists. RAWA also argues that the Afghan government should hold "free and fair elections," and encourages a separation of religion and state. The organization, the site proclaims, "believes that only a government with a secular orientation can thwart the nefarious designs of these reactionaries from the Dark Ages."

The Web also acts as something of a virtual headquarters for the RAWA guerrillas, who are forced to run a clandestine cam-



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paign. Fearing an unannounced visit from gun-toting Taliban operatives, RAWA has no official office. Indeed, the group's mailing address is a post-office box in Pakistan.

RAWA launched its site three years ago, when members taught themselves to use HTML. But the group itself has been around since 1977, founded by female Afghan intellectuals led by a revolutionary named Meena. According to the site, the "martyred leader" was assassinated 10 years later by KGB agents and their fundamentalist accomplices.

Danish says the Web page receives about 150 visitors and five to 10 e-mail messages daily, as well as periodic donations of clothing and food from other women's organizations. The site has also felt the ire of the Taliban and its supporters, who once published a counterfeit RAWA site that included pornographic pictures.

"They would love to see the end of our site," says Danish, noting that even the location of her Web server is a secret. "But this is fortunately beyond their means."

SMALL TOUCHES



GAZING AT THE STARS

image.gsfc.nasa.gov/poetry/ask/askmag.html

What is a black hole? Why doesn't Earth spin off its axis? Don't ask us, **ASK THE SPACE SCIENTIST**—Dr. Sten Odenwald, a Harvard-trained astronomer who seems to have an answer for every starry question. In May 1995, he launched a personal site called The Astronomy Cafe, from which he answered queries e-mailed to him by Web surfers. Two years later, he folded the busy site into his job as an education and outreach director at NASA and began the Space Scientist page. During the past three years, he has answered some 22,000 inquiries from all over the world, on every astronomical

topic under (and sometimes about) the sun. The site publishes some 4,700 frequently asked questions—such as those about the big bang theory and the theory of relativity—and is so popular that it spawned a book, *The Astronomy Cafe: 365 Questions and Answers from Ask the Astronomer* (W.H. Freeman & Co., 1998). Dr.

Odenwald, who says he applied to teach at the university level several times but "never got the call" with a job offer, now has a classroom as big as the planet.

DECODING SIGN LANGUAGE

www.commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb

Finally, a site that's not afraid to get its hands dirty. From Michigan State University comes the **AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE BROWSER**, a clear, useful, and innovative way to learn sign language. The site offers QuickTime video footage of a woman signing hundreds of words and phrases, from "a lot" to "zoom." Also included are text descriptions of the action involved in a sign, such as "wacky"—which, the site explains, is conveyed when "the movement of the finger indicates that the brain is all mixed up."

WRITING UP THE WRONGS

www.powerup.com.au/~dmcclure/progr.htm

Australian David McClure is a freelance animator who, in his spare time, draws and quarters those who don't respect human rights. The Web is his medium, and his **PROGRESSIVE STUFF** site is designed to point a virtual finger at regions of the world that are lax in the protection of their people. The site is designed to give "less of a mainstream view of the world," says McClure, adding that such alternative perspectives are "what the Net is supposed to provide." Traverse the globe with him as he visits Tibet, East Timor, and Chechnya, or follow his links to pages about women's and environmental issues. Though it's merely a hobby, the site is sure to give Web users enough background to be more critical when, as McClure puts it, they "watch news on the telly."



REMEMBERING THE GOOD WAR

members.tripod.com/~Memory_WWII

April 1945. In a fierce battle during the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, baby-faced Private Hugh Summerfield demonstrated the kind of heroism that had already earned him a Silver Star and Purple Heart. Hour after hour, the 18-year-old went back under heavy fire to retrieve fallen comrades, until at last he, too, was felled. Summerfield's story and numerous others appear on **IN MEMORY OF WORLD WAR II**, a compilation of recollections by those who witnessed the conflict at close range. Not all of the narratives concern battles, however; there are also chronicles from the home front, and from citizens of war-torn Europe. "Our goal," writes Andrew Wong, the site's proprietor, "is to promote peace by allowing others to learn about our past firsthand."

MAKING COLLEGE A REALITY

www.collegeispossible.com

When a coalition of some 1,200 American colleges and universities surveyed prospective students and their parents, a disturbing trend became evident. Many who responded dramatically overestimated the price of a postsecondary education while underestimating the resources available to help foot the bill. In response, the group started a Web site whose name, **COLLEGE IS POSSIBLE**, says it all. Find out about financial assistance (yes, the U.S. government *does* have money to give) and learn the 10 steps that parents can take to prepare their children for college. The site also features a library of links to related information.



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Expanding Possibilities



The Incredible Shrinking Media Lab

SOAPS, ONLINE SHOPPING, AND TALKING HEADS—WHAT A CONCEPT

I'm spending a day at the famed **MIT MEDIA LAB** (www.media.mit.edu), and computer geniuses are giving me demos of their brainstorm. I sit in a conference room with Mike Bove, Stefan Agamanolis, and Jon Dakss, who are using a projection TV to show me their new concept, HyperSoap. It looks like a soap opera. A man and a woman are having an anguished conversation. Apparently they keep finding their genitals in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The man is wearing a blue blazer. Agamanolis points a laser pen at the screen and clicks on the blazer. A panel



pops up at the side of the screen: "Blue wool blazer, \$129." Then he clicks on a painting on the wall behind the man. The pop-up reads, "Classic landscape reproduction, \$49.95."

The guys turn to me with glowing faces. "We thought it was such a bad idea that we should do it before anybody else did," Bove explains. "We shot it at the JCPenney studios in Texas."

They have combined two compatible demographics—soap operas and home shopping. The deal is: You watch the soap, and if you see anything in the frame you like, you can click on it, get the price and other info, and add it to

your shopping basket. *Royal Kona coffee beans, \$36/lb. BMW sports coupe, \$57,000. Susan Lucci's nightgown, \$137.*

"Wow," I say. "Of course, the shopping aspect might tend to interrupt your involvement in the drama...."

But even as I speak, I know that soap operas don't require intense involvement; they rehash the plot every day. And shopping networks dwell endlessly on their merchandise, as a convenience for viewers who may have to leave the room to top up from the vodka bottle in the freezer. There is no practical reason why HyperSoap wouldn't work. It takes the two most addictive genres on TV and uses each as a cure for the other.

This is obviously the killer app for WebTV. And as click-shopping continues to invade the Web, why not marry it to hypertext and let surfers simultaneously roam through plots and products? *Attack Klingon in second corridor on left, wearing Timberland boots....*

"Now let us show you something else," the guys say. "This is called Reflection of Presence." On the big screen, we're watching an online videoconference. Most videoconferencing systems employ the same two ancient approaches. Either there's a split screen, with each participant in an individual small window, or the software switches to whoever is talking. Net-based videoconferencing has a long way to go, but the Media Lab guys think they know the right direction.

Reflection of Presence uses only one screen. This frame contains a full-face shot of each participant (you're in trouble if you've got 73 participants, but imagine three or four). The software automatically places the current

speaker in the foreground, and puts everyone else in the background.

I've been watching Reflection of Presence for only 15 seconds when I realize I'm seeing a revolutionary new style for TV talk shows. Forget videoconferencing. Imagine one of those cable-TV political debates where the liberals are on the left and the conservatives are on the right, and they're all being shot from camera positions over one another's shoulders—so that no matter how cleverly the director cuts, they always seem to be talking to one person while looking at someone else.

Now line up all four on the screen with Reflection of Presence. There they are: Kondracke, Huffington, Novak, and Carlson. All on-screen at once. Whoever is talking is larger and in the foreground. The other three are in permanent background reaction shots. We can always see what they're thinking.

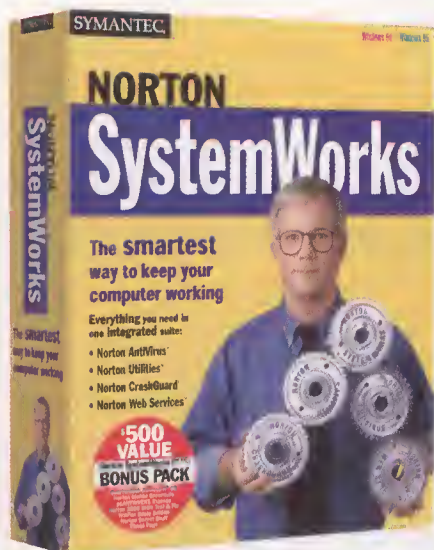
Refinements and sophistications suggest themselves. The software could be tweaked so that the longer you spoke, the larger your face would grow. Your fellow panelists, peeking at the monitor, would be driven to interrupt, if only to get themselves back in view. Another tweak would be even more effective: The longer you spoke, the smaller your face would become. That would encourage concise wording.

During a political debate, the device of the shrinking head would be dramatically more effective than any moderator in keeping the candidates within their time limits: After your 90 seconds, you shrink to the size of a pinhead, while your opponent swells. As someone known for the economy, concision, and razor-sharp timing of my speech, I can even see possibilities for the Siskel & Ebert program.



GEAR UP FOR TOP PERFORMANCE

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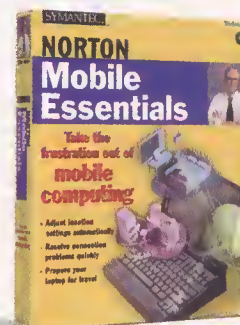
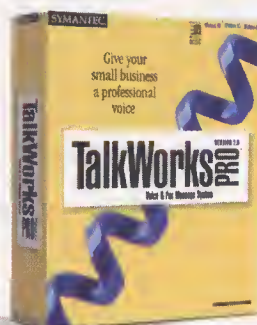
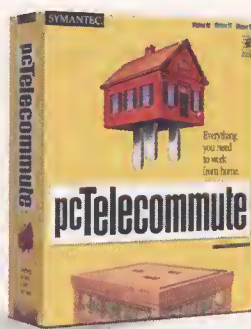
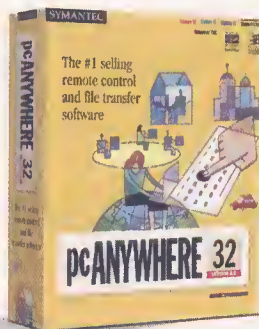
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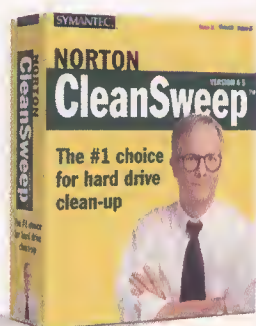
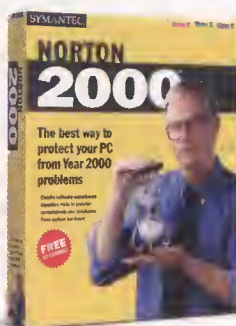
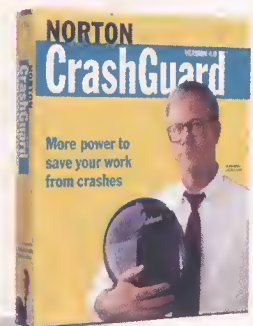
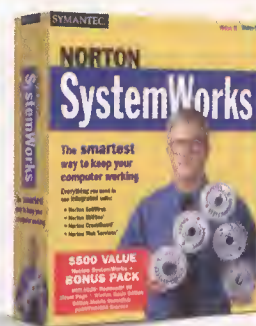
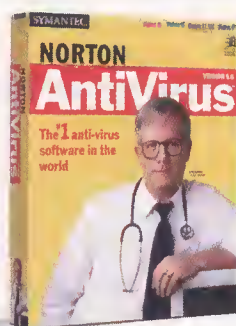
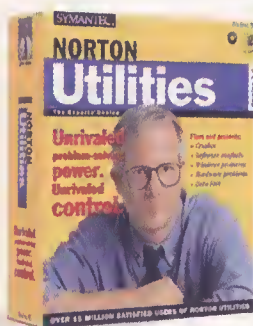
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Blocking Hate

CAN SOFTWARE SHIELD YOU FROM EXTREMIST SITES?

What if you could silence hate speech with a software application? What if you could make it nearly impossible to find on the Web, banishing it the way the Prohibitionists tried to banish alcohol with the Eighteenth Amendment?

That seems to be the thinking behind HateFilter, a program that works with your browser to block out the kinds of extremist and hatemongering sites that "Safety Net" has examined the past few months. Developed by the **ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE** [www.adl.org] and the Learning Company, which makes the filtering software **CYBER PATROL** [www.cyberpatrol.com], HateFilter blacklists hundreds of Web sites that the ADL thinks are promoting "hatred or hostility towards groups...on the basis of their religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or other immutable characteristics." (A trial version is available free at the ADL site.)

Well, fine. Yes, the ADL has been "fighting hate since 1913," according to Mark Edelman, the group's director of marketing and communications. But what gives the ADL the right to decide who's advocating hate? What is HateFilter, and how does it work? Does it, in fact, work at all?

"About 18 months ago, we decided to develop a filter that parents could put on their computer that would prevent their kids from seeing hate sites," Edelman explains. "What makes this filter special is that when it comes upon a hate site, it redirects you to the ADL, so we can explain why that site is blocked."

Blocking is what filters do, by using a list of preselected Web addresses and/or by recognizing on a Web site certain phrases or words the filter maker finds objectionable. Though filters are usually associated with preventing kids from

gazing upon the wonders at, say, Atomic Sex Kittens.com, Edelman says the joint ADL/Cyber Patrol version works from a blacklist of "several hundred" sites the ADL has dug up through the efforts of its staff and from outside suggestions.

But even the Learning Company concedes that the actual product isn't much more than an add-on to its standard smut-sniffing version. And that, contends Karen G. Schneider, a librarian and author who coordinated **THE INTERNET FILTER ASSESSMENT PROJECT** [www.bluehighways.com/tifap], leaves something to be desired: "There's no artificial intelligence or sophisticated programming detecting subtle intolerance and disgust for those different from us at, for example, the Family Research Council."

Completely ignored by HateFilter, the **FRC** [www.frc.org] posts a weekly CultureFacts column that warns visitors about the "cultural forces that threaten the traditional family, with a special focus on the homosexual agenda...to redefine marriage and family and propagandize children." In a recent column, all good Americans were enjoined to roundly protest *USA Today's* quoting of Ellen DeGeneres's mother, who stated that families could be "biological, nuclear, extended, or chosen."

Neither the ADL nor the Learning Company is willing to disclose which sites are being blocked. The list is a secret. It's like going for an inoculation to a doctor who won't tell you what you're being immunized against.

Does HateFilter work? When "Safety Net" tested it on some of the most spite-filled sites online, it blocked only a few. We quickly pulled up the neo-Nazi **STORMFRONT** [www.stormfront.org] and **RESISTANCE RECORDS** [www.resistance.com] sites, as

well as the gay-bashing **GOD HATES FAGS** [www.godhatesfags.com] and **CHRISTIAN DEFENSE LEAGUE** [home.inreach.com/dov/cdl.htm] pages.

During our test, it was only when we tried accessing **ARYAN NATIONS** [www.nidlink.com/~aryanvic] and **NATIONAL ALLIANCE** [www.natvan.com] that the "Hate Zone" warning popped up. Clicking on the prominent ADL logo took us back to the group's site, where we were directed to the Anti-Semitism category—one of nine, including Holocaust Denial, Nation of Islam, and Homophobia.

What can you do? "Most free-



thinking adults should realize that the only way to be vigilant about hate propaganda is to be exposed to it from time to time," says Robert Ellis Smith of **PRIVACY JOURNAL** [www.townonline.com/privacyjournal]. Using such resources as **HATEWATCH** [www.hatewatch.org], the **SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER** [www.splcenter.org], and the ADL's own site, you can diminish hatred by, as Schneider advises, "throwing information at it."

Otherwise, as with Prohibition, you stand the risk of making the forbidden more popular—and, paradoxically, more accepted—than ever.



REALITY CHECK



Is the Rio Grand Yet?

AND OTHER HOPE-TO-HYPE TOPICS

1] DON'T BLAME IT ON RIO

THE PROMISE: Download new tunes from the Web. Enjoy anywhere.
THE REALITY: Download obscure tunes. Enjoy near your computer.

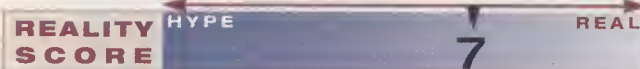
The \$200 Rio is a tiny, portable music player from Diamond Multimedia that stores songs on memory chips rather than on tape or CD. The size of a deck of cards, it lets you download and play an hour of CD-quality songs in the .MP3 format. It has no moving parts, so the music never skips. You can pull music from .MP3 Web sites or transfer it from CDs.

Sounds great. In many ways, it is. Still, the first-generation Rio is far from perfect. But just as flaws can make some people seem more exciting, Rio's drawbacks add to its sex appeal. Take the Rio's rebel bent. It plays only .MP3 tracks. On such Web sites as **MP3.com** [www.mp3.com], that means mostly obscure songs by unknown artists. The recording industry doesn't support .MP3, so the only way to get current hits is to download tough-to-find illegal copies.

Not to mention its love 'em and leave 'em nature. The Rio stores only 10 to 12 songs. To change selections, you kiss those tunes good-bye and load in a new set. That means heading back to your computer. And cooling your heels for nearly an hour while the songs download. (Fans of the Rio build up song libraries on their hard disks for quick transfer.)

Despite obvious shortcomings, the Rio is the rage among the music cognoscenti. And the start of a powerful, long-term trend. Toward digital music on demand. And build-your-own CDs.

That's tomorrow. Today, the Rio is worthwhile for the status value alone.



2] E-BOOKS—THE EYES DON'T HAVE IT

THE PROMISE: Never carry another bulky book.
THE REALITY: Carry another bulky (and expensive) gadget instead.

How would you like to pay *more* for books that are harder to read, harder to share, and break if you drop them? How

inane! Yet how easy to do—if you fall for the electronic-book hype. Portfolio-size e-books hold text you download from the Web. The devices, such as Rocket eBook from NuvoMedia and SoftBook by SoftBook Press, cost anywhere from \$200 to \$600.

For your money, you get the privilege of paying hardcover prices for books (\$20 a pop). The privilege of waiting long minutes for new titles to download. The privilege of carting around another fragile device along with your cell phone, pager, handheld, and laptop. The privilege of straining your vision while trying to read from a computer screen.

Someday, e-books may make traditional volumes obsolete. But not until they are smaller, faster, and a *lot* easier on the eyes.



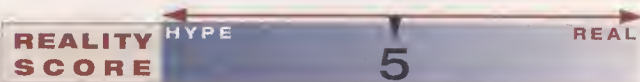
3] WANNA BE A STAR? HANG OUT ON THE WEB

THE PROMISE: The Net is a great place to recycle ideas created in various traditional media.

THE REALITY: Traditional media are a great place to recycle ideas created on the Net.

Hollywood legend has it that actress Lana Turner was discovered at a drugstore soda counter. Today's star makers are skipping the five-and-ten and heading straight for the Web, where they're scooping up new talent faster than Al Gore sucks up campaign contributions. Take **Matt Drudge** (please!). After cornering the Net gossip market last fall at [www.drudgereport.com], Drudge landed a deal with Fox. Take **Salon** [www.salonmagazine.com], the sexy, highbrow site turned print magazine.

And now take **The Onion** [www.theonion.com]. Long the favored humor site of Web insiders, *The Onion recently snagged a \$450,000 book deal, an MTV special, and (perhaps) a prime-time network special. Entertainment moguls used to take tired ideas from TV or print and shoehorn them onto the Internet. Now ideas are flowing in the other direction. Wanna be a star? Better get on the Net. Fast.*



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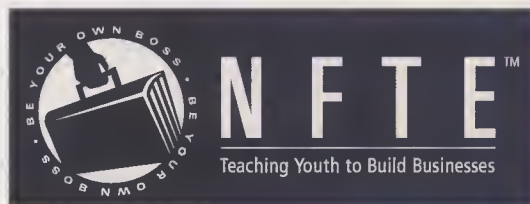
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You want to e-mail.
He needs to download.
She'd like to surf.
Who will be left standing?



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HELLO
my name is

~~big hun k 29~~

~~matt girl 16~~

~~dr. paul b~~

Liar Liar

Screen names keep us anonymous. Digital identities can be forged. The online world is full of liars—and that's the truth

In a story that's all about lying, the first sentence should be entirely true. The second sentence should be half-true; it's the only way to foster a climate of trust and simultaneously undermine it. From there on in, though, it's a free-for-all. Just like the Net.

In the wake of a year that was all about lying, it's easy to pick up the habit. While the president was being pilloried for his peccadilloes, while Bob Livingston was martyring himself before the House, millions of people were practicing the art of deception every day on the Internet. Men who had never been near a mountain were trying to im-

press women in skiers' chat rooms by boasting of their prowess on the slopes. Women who were men were answering back, pretending to be impressed. Old men could be young again, and seduce young girls (or boys). And married women were claiming to be single in online surveys—not so they could sneak around behind their husbands' backs, but so they could avoid direct-marketing e-mails pitching subbasement prices on insurance for married couples. There was deceptive flirting, deceptive advice, and outright fraud. In fact, recent surveys indicate that fully half of all online

by Ben Greenman

users have given out false information in surveys. And most surfers, it's fair to say, do their online traveling under assumed names.

Are the statistics about online lying true? Are they even statistics? Who knows? Statistics themselves are lies, and statistics about liars are even more so. But one thing's for certain: If you're not lying, you're not online.

Why has there been no national self-flagellation over the deluge of online deception? How could the online world resist the same guilty purge as Congress? What accounts for the fact that America seems tolerant—and even in favor—of online lying? Why do we, as citizens of this new wired nation, so fiercely protect our right to create new personae?

The short answer: Lies online are tolerated because most



of them are so trivial (OK, so you're not a world-class skier), and because they're impossible to control (there's no good way to enforce truth-telling in a medium as fugitive as the Net). But these reasons are only a shadow cast by a larger fact: Online identity and communication permit—and even promote—a certain shiftiness. Consider *privacy*, the Net's hottest buzzword. What does it mean? The right to control the flow of personal information. And how do you control the flow of personal information? By holding back pieces of your identity, or by twisting it a bit.

How do you twist your identity? Well, to filch a technicality from the president, that depends on what your definition of *your* is. Off-line, identities are encased in bodies. A body occupies physical space. It can't be in more than one place at a time. It isn't exactly the same as any other body. An individual identity can be mapped perfectly onto a body, and a real-world name is merely a label for a body. Online

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information
in surveys

names are significantly more slippery: Selected by the user, not subject to review or certification, these jumbles of letters and numbers are perfect vehicles for misrepresentations and untruths. Sometimes

hermetic codes that have significance only to their authors, sometimes just numbers, online names produce an atmosphere of mystery and reveal little.

The secret-agent feel of online names is catalyzed by the flatness of online expression—specifically, the fact that the vast majority of conversations are conducted in ordinary ASCII text. Is that 40-year-old man you spoke to in a chat room actually a 40-year-old man, or is he a 15-year-old boy in disguise? Is the woman who posted the diatribe in the ecology newsgroup actually a marine biologist? In person, such charades would be preposterously hard to maintain. Even if the deception weren't immediately apparent, face-to-face meetings would produce enough clues to out the liar. ("One may sometimes tell a lie," wrote Nietzsche, "but the grimace that accompanies it tells the truth.")

In the plain-text world of the Internet, however, where the average person has trouble distinguishing sentiment from sarcasm, some of the most outlandish claims are nearly impossible to disprove. The online world allows its citizens to conceal their true faces, but it also allows them to be taken at their word—a potent combination, indeed.

JUDITH DONATH ANSWERS HER TELEPHONE on the second ring. At least I think it's Judith Donath. She says "Judith Donath," and her voice is the same one I heard earlier on her answering machine. Still, there's no proof that this voice belongs to the same person pictured at the **Judith S. Donath** Web page [judith.www.media.mit.edu/Judith/], or the same person who has written e-mails signed "Judith Donath."

I don't mention this to Donath. I don't need to. After all, she is one of the online world's leading thinkers in matters of Internet-related identity and deception. A soft-spoken assistant professor at the MIT Media Lab, Donath has spent much of her academic career investigating the ways in which the online world encourages (or discourages) hon-

esty and stable character. "People online lie about everything—age, appearance, location, et cetera," says Donath. "We've always had to deal with all kinds of lies in real life, long before there was any Internet. Lots of people dye their hair. Most people don't find that too upsetting." The Net, she concedes, has raised the stakes a bit by fostering certain types of deception: "I think some of the impulse comes from the medium. There are some people who wouldn't have spent any of their life pretending were it not for the medium. It is a little unprecedented."

Donath's research ranges far and wide—into biology, game theory, and semiotics—but at its base, her work in this area is founded on a simple premise: Deception has crucial effects on Net communities, whether those communities are chat rooms, Internet relay chat (IRC) channels, newsgroups, mailing lists, or even online stores.

When Donath set out to study online environments, she found that surfers' identities were so ambiguous that they defeated fruitful inquiry. AOL chat rooms, for example, were an orgy of lying (see "Unidentified Lying Objects," page 92). "Those rooms encourage that kind of deceptive behavior," says Donath. "But for my research, I was interested more in places where the ongoing assumption was that people weren't lying"—places, in other words, that attached consequence to deception. This led her to Usenet, the ever-expanding universe of Net-wide discussion groups. Ancient by online standards, Usenet groups have evolved into genuine online communities, each with its own local culture. Lies are not uncommon, and they're difficult to prevent, but when they do occur, the effects are serious, both for the individuals and the community.

Donath's fieldwork in Usenet groups exposed a paradox. Most online communities depend on disclosure to create intimacy among strangers. But they also rely on subterfuge, because it's the only reliable way to protect

members from unwanted exposure. "This kind of deception isn't just for the novelty," she explains. "It makes people feel safer. Telling the truth is a vital part of the interaction, as is telling certain kinds of lies."

The most common types of online lies, of course, are identity-related ruses, lies users tell about themselves that enable them to play fast and loose with their off-line personalities—extending them, experimenting with them, and even attempting to escape them. Sometimes these lies are simple matters of wish fulfillment. Chubby secretaries

become captains of industry with washboard stomachs. Teenagers become thirty-somethings, and vice versa.

But sometimes these lies may be the truth. "Pseudonymity allows people who are experimenting with different sorts of interests to do so without

social repercussions," says Jerry Kang, a UCLA law professor and specialist in cyberspace privacy. "People can temporarily obscure their real life and play with a different conception of what their lives might be. Often, this exercise reveals something about the person. Sometimes it's bad, because it allows people who wouldn't participate in racial-hatred newsgroups to do so. Sometimes it's good, because it lets someone experiment with sexual identity." Often, these personae are not simple misrepresentations of the real people who stand behind them, but complex extensions. It's not that the truth shall set online users free. It's that superficial

forms of deception may liberate deeper truths.

If online identity modification does deliver the user from certain off-line consequences—most notably, the immediate threat of physical harm—it does not erase consequence entirely. Users can readily escape their real-world bodies and names and the set of traits attached to those bodies and names; some MUDs (text-based multiuser communities) have even designed entire grammars of gender-neutral pronouns to facilitate online "cross-dressing." But users do have to manage their new identities responsibly.



Superficial
forms of
deception
may liberate
deeper
truths

If a young woman goes online and voices virulently anti-Asian sentiments, *she* may not be tarred with the racist brush. But her screen name will. And the man whose screen name gets a reputation as a galling sexist will have trouble shaking that infamy. The online world, it turns out, is not anonymous at all but, rather, powerfully pseudonymous. "Online identities," says Kang, "are quickly individuated,

and rapidly acquire reputations of their own."

Exposed thoughts, concealed identities—most online communities depend upon this balance. It's sort of like a religious confession, only more so: As an online domination fetishist who goes by the name ThroTchr explains, Net pseudonyms allow members of sexual subcultures to "share thoughts and feelings with others that [they] would never

Unidentified Lying Objects

In AOL's chat rooms, everyone's pants are on fire

The theories about online identity and deception come fast and furious. Sometimes they're simple, and sometimes they're complicated. But theories are bloodless.

Time to bleed.

On a cloudy day in mid-December, I entered a variety of America Online chat rooms using a fake identity—a 29-year-old single woman living in Chicago. Crazily destabilized, deceptive in the extreme, AOL chat rooms are ontological labyrinths in which nothing is true, and even lies aren't what they seem. To succeed in the member rooms, you'll have to lie to the other members. And lying isn't always easy—it requires quick thinking, quick typing, and consistent tone.

The first person to approach me was a "cool dude" with the consonant-ridden screen name of LtPersl. Well, LtPersl wasn't his real name. It wasn't even his fake name. Pseudonyms have been changed to protect the innocent and the not-so-innocent. Even though AOL members operate in a large and fluid community, the disclosure of screen names might confine online activity. LtPersl and I chatted. I told him I was depressed, because a woman I had been talking to as a friend turned out to be a man. "Cool," he said. "What are you wearing?" I fished around some more. Soon enough, I found another guy and fed him the same story. Rather than spit it up, he chewed and swallowed.

AOL Man No. 1: sorry to hear that.

ME: see, at least with you I know you're a guy right away.

AOL Man No. 1: why would i lie

ME: just because, I guess. but you are re-

ally a guy, right? (I don't mean to sound paranoid, but I guess I'm a little paranoid.)

AOL Man No. 1: i know, you should be

ME: why? are they out to get me? :)

AOL Man No. 1: no, only kidding

ME: once I lied and said I was a guy. I have this other screen name that was an ex-boyfriend's. it was totally strange.

AOL Man No. 1: what do you look like

ME: about 5' 7", brownish hair, brownish eyes. people say I look like sandra bullock, except smarter.

AOL Man No. 1: nice, where are you now, at work or home

ME: at work. I work in an advertising agency.

AOL Man No. 1: how old are you

ME: 25. you?

AOL Man No. 1: 33. i love bi women

ME: why do you love bi women?

AOL Man No. 1: something about women with women

ME: yeah, yeah. all hail scissor pals.

As I said, I lied consistently. I am not 25. I am not 5 feet, 7 inches tall. I do not work in an advertising agency—if I did, I could have certainly come up with a better slogan for bisexual women than "all hail scissor pals." Did AOL Man No. 1 sense the deception? Well, he expressed anxiety about my real gender ("how do I know you're really a girl") and asked me to call him on the telephone. When I refused, the request turned to a plea, and he gave me his office phone number.

I kept chatting throughout the afternoon. I had a lovely conversation about British literature with someone claiming to be a 62-

year-old woman (I had no reason to disbelieve her) and an abortive romance with someone claiming to be a "hot 22-year-old babe" (I had many reasons to disbelieve her—chief among them the fact that she "was wearing no panteis" [sic]). Finally, I found another suitable partner, and we got to talking about Net untruth and its consequences.

ME: have you ever lied to anyone online?

AOL Man No. 2: no!!!!!! I pride myself on my honesty and respect for others

ME: never? not even a little tiny white lie? or if a conversation gets too detailed, you just refuse to give out information? (like if I asked your address, you obviously wouldn't give it out, right?)

AOL Man No. 2: i would tell you I didn't wanna divulge that information. lots of it is about blind faith.

ME: yeah, but why would I have blind faith after so many people have turned out to be liars?

AOL Man No. 2: Its mainly directed at me, I believe what I am told until I am given enough evidence to believe other wise

ME: well, that's tremendously trusting. some might even say gullible.

AOL Man No. 2: or even naive, but I get to feel out a person that way, they hand me a line of crap, thats it! its a weird game on here, just don't give out information to people unless you really wholeheartedly trust them. but you are a good woman, you will make the right decisions

I took my leave then, proud to be a good woman.
—B.G.

tell a priest, rabbi, or minister." The same principle holds true in many online retail communities, where people buy and sell potentially embarrassing items pseudonymously. Insist on real names, and the community dissolves.

But this is a delicate equipoise. Tip it too far in the other direction—too far toward obscuring identity—and the consequences for the group can be grave. Take, for example, the controversy that erupted in the [alt.movies.kubrick] newsgroup last year, when one of the newsgroup regulars posted a long, anguished suicide note: Life was bleak; the world, heartless and cruel. Other members of the group sprang into action and tracked down the real person behind the online mask, only to find that the suicide note was a hoax, a forgery written by an interloper who had temporarily borrowed the identity of another surfer. "For weeks after that," says one newsgroup regular who requested anonymity, "the atmosphere was awkward and uncomfortable. It was difficult to talk about anything, or even to engage in any kind of real debate. Even those who hadn't been the target of the duplicity felt as if they had been violated." This practice of pretending to be someone else in a newsgroup is known as "trolling," and in Donath's travels around Usenet, she ran across many trolls. "I found that the trolls, as destructive as they were, served a valuable function," she says. "They reminded the people on the newsgroup that not everyone was being honest all the time. They served as a kind of corrective, a cautionary."

What's more, Donath adds, they also sparked some rough justice: "It wasn't as if newsgroups were passive. When other members suspected someone of being a troll, they said so." Groups that have been burned—the victims of a scheming stock tout, say—often circulate the screen names of the suspected troll in much the same way that stores post the driver's licenses of check forgers, and the groups sometimes even create a Web page with copies of the offending posts. And once a user is branded as a troll, it is

Does it pain
surfers to
exist in a
climate of
persistent
distrust?



difficult for that user to reenter discussions in that newsgroup.

The newsgroups' disciplining of trolls suggests that online communities are capable of developing effective strategies for dealing with deception. In fact, many communities have already taken steps to curtail misrepresentation; one of the most popular involves building bridges between real and virtual identities, even at the expense of all-important online privacy protection. **ECHO** [www.echonyc.com], the venerable New York-based e-collective, has attempted to do away with pseudonymity entirely.

"Everyone goes by their real name, which we do our best to verify through credit cards and such," says Stacy Horn, ECHO's president. "We do that because we believe that the more a system is anonymous, the more likely people are

to deceive or project onto others." But Horn adds that online exposure is only part of the plan. "What we find as important is to have an active face-to-face element. People tend to be more themselves when they think they're going to eventually face the people they're talking to."

Finally, there's the argument that the controversy itself is the solution to the problem. "I think it will make people actually think through these issues much more," says Donath. "One of the things that I have found really interesting is that identity issues that come up online are not fundamentally different from things that could happen in the real world. Online, people articulate it better. They're more sensitized to the issue. They understand that they have to consciously choose how to present themselves, or whether or not to release personal information."

An object lesson for her own theory, Donath falters slightly when I ask for her age and the spelling of her name.

DOES THE PERVASIVENESS OF LYING IN THE online world bother most surfers? Does it pain them to exist in a climate of persistent distrust? Only they know for sure. And they're not saying. Why so tight-lipped? Well, privacy, of course. According *continued on page 132*

BY DAVID SHEFF

face time

with Cindy Crawford

THE INFORMATION SUPERMODEL TALKS ABOUT HER NEW WEB SITE, SEX, BEAUTY, AND THE JOYS AND PERILS OF GOING OUT ALONE ONLINE

Chats, e-mail, and faxes are all efficient, but there's still nothing like face time. Supermodel Cindy Crawford knows about face time after appearing on 400 magazine covers—and that doesn't include all that *bodytime*: She posed nude in an issue of *Playboy* last year that broke sales records, and her images have been downloaded more often than any software program we can think of. Indeed, Crawford, willing or not, has an enormous presence on the Web. She is the object of as many as 100,000 Web sites. On a recent Web21 listing of the most popular Web stars, she's No. 5, right after President Clinton. But now is the first time Crawford will be online of her own volition: She's launching her own site [www.cindy.com]. Crawford, in the wake of her less-than-spectacular ABC television special *Sex with Cindy Crawford*, sat down with *Y-Life* to talk about her site—and what she's learned about love, beauty, and sex. And, not incidentally, about dealing with false identities online, this issue's theme. >>

PHOTOS: MICHAEL O'NEILL/OUTLINE



www.liaoy.com

Y-LIFE: *What inspired Cindy.com?*

CRAWFORD: Models are seen as two-dimensional, which is logical; it's how you see us on a magazine page.

But there are many other aspects of my personality that I want to share, from my TV projects to health information to charities I care about. I've seen what's out there about me, and I don't like a lot of it. On one site, my face morphs into a dog's face. At least I've done nude photographs, so the people who like to manufacture nudes don't have to bother with me.

Y-LIFE: *Does it matter that most of the sites are worshipping?*

CRAWFORD: I know there are lots of nice sites out there, but none that reflects me and comes from me. I guess I just want to have some control of one site. It's not that I object to the fan sites; we're going to select a favorite fan site of the month. But at least there will also be a source of information directly from me—just a more complete picture of Cindy Crawford.

Y-LIFE: *On the whole, is it flattering or bothersome to be so prominent on the Web?*

CRAWFORD: I don't have any problem with fans putting together what are basically virtual shrines. They're flattering, though it gets tricky. When they sell advertising or sell access to their site, it's illegal. They don't have the rights to use my pictures for commercial purposes. I'm pretty sure they didn't get



Body, language: A model citizen in the flesh and on the Web

clearances from the photographers, either. It's complicated in other ways. If someone uses my picture on a site that has cigarette advertising, for instance, it's potentially damaging to me. My contract with Revlon says that I will not advertise tobacco. Generally I don't think that other people should be able to make money off me without my permission.

Y-LIFE: *But would you censor the Net?*

CRAWFORD: No, though privacy and property laws still need to apply. In addition, it would really upset me if someone had taken an image of me and altered it. I don't know what you can do, but it would be upsetting. They did it with Alyssa Milano. They added her head to a pornographic photograph, someone performing oral sex. I don't think anyone can think that is all right. Privacy is also an issue.

Y-LIFE: *In general, are you a Net fan?*

CRAWFORD: I'm using it now. I was very pleased to find a movie in L.A. using www.movielink.com, for instance. I send e-mail. I don't, however, like how things can just be sent to you unsolicited, and they simply arrive on your computer. I don't open

my door if a stranger knocks, but if anyone gets your e-mail address—no matter how they get it—they can arrive in your living room. But that's not my biggest gripe about the Net. The worst part is that it seems isolating. It gives

you the illusion of being with people—you're out there on the World Wide Web—but you are really just sitting by yourself at home. To me, that's lonely.

Y-LIFE: *Yet online communities, chat rooms, and discussion groups alleviate the loneliness of many people.*

CRAWFORD: But it's not real human interaction, in my opinion. Also, how many people have false relationships? People make themselves up, pump themselves up a little bit. It is not reality.

Y-LIFE: *Have you seen chat rooms firsthand?*

CRAWFORD: When we first got our computer, I tried one to see what all the hoopla was about. I felt like I was in there with Beavis and Butt-Head. Maybe I was in a bad chat room, but it's not somewhere I'd choose to spend my time. On the other hand, my cousin helped me set up a buddy list, so now I can talk to my grandmother and other people in my family. That's fun. I know everyone in the room. Others may want to use the Net to meet people, and I can't be judgmental. If they get off on it, fine. I wouldn't do what some people do, though. A friend met someone online at four one morning. The guy said he looked like Tom Cruise and said, "Come on over." They both lived in the L.A. area, and so my friend arrived at this person's house at four o'clock in the morning. That's just plain stupid. My friend drove down a long street to a cul-de-sac where every house was dark except for one. There was a naked man—not Tom Cruise—sitting in front of his computer [in his living room], lit only by the glow from the computer screen. Fortunately, my friend was smart enough to turn around and go home. But that's not my idea of healthy relationship skills.

Y-LIFE: *That is stupid, yet many people are more cautious and have had good results.*

CRAWFORD: I know people who have met online, and it went well. But I just think

it creates a false sense of security and intimacy. People at home in front of their computers reveal things about themselves that they wouldn't on a first date. I would try to use the same guidelines you'd use on a first meeting, because you don't really know who you're talking to. You need to be careful. I know why the Net appeals. First of all, no matter what technology is available, people still have a hard time meeting people, at least the right people. So here's something new to try. For people tired of bars and blind dates, the people you meet online get a first impression other than a face. A lot of people like the idea of being judged for who they are, not what they look like. There are a couple of problems, though. How do you know that the person you're talking to online is genuine? We've all heard stories of people who lie. There are a lot of "Tom Cruises" out there. Beyond people lying about their looks, they lie about their gender, their marital status, and more. And even if you were to meet someone online who was sincere, what about chemistry? Chemistry is part of what will make a relationship work. Standing next to someone may tell you more than talking to them on a computer. Pheromones don't travel over computer networks.

Y-LIFE: *Yet people have met and fallen in love.*

CRAWFORD: It's possible to meet someone online, find similar interests and some intellectual connection, and they didn't care if you were 10 pounds overweight or whatever. That's the good news. But it's still very difficult. The Internet can be used as a tool, but I would just use it as a tool combined with common sense.

Y-LIFE: *In general, how are love and sex changing? Did you gain insights when you researched your TV special Sex with Cindy Crawford?*

CRAWFORD: People were very open about sex—in fact, they wanted to talk about it. Particularly couples in their fifties and sixties wanted to share what they knew, because they suffered earlier because no one talked about sex. We all learned how much less puritanical and prudish people are than was expected throughout the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal. The last election showed how Americans really feel. They feel, "What's the big deal?" We interviewed a bunch of teenagers and found them extremely well educated. I was very

impressed. They were so far ahead of where I was at 16. One girl said, "Everyone teaches me how to protect myself from AIDS, but no one teaches how to protect myself emotionally." They want to know how to have a relationship, not just how to have sex. I was blown away. She said, "There is no such thing as an emotional condom." A lot of young people come from broken homes—single-parent homes—and don't know how to have a good relationship, because they haven't seen one. They want that information to go along with the sex education.

Y-LIFE: *Why were you less informed at 16?*

CRAWFORD: The whole climate of sexu-

“Standing next to someone may tell you more than talking to them on a computer. Pheromones don't travel over computer networks”

ality was different then. AIDS wasn't around yet. Our biggest fear was getting pregnant and losing your reputation. So in some ways, things haven't changed all that much. If a girl "did it," she was considered loose, and boys got a notch in their belts. That doesn't seem to have changed much. But one girl, still a virgin, said, "I just know that sex is a really big deal." She said, "In some ways, it seems like more trouble than it's worth; I know it will change my relationship, and I'm not sure I'm ready for those changes." Just to be able to talk in that kind of way shows a great deal of maturity.

Y-LIFE: *Has that attitude been influenced by the conservative, pro-abstinence campaigns?*

CRAWFORD: Teaching abstinence is ridiculous. It's not why kids make good decisions. The kids who believed in abstinence were from families that were supportive of them. One girl was from a Christian family and had a very close relationship with

her mother. She had very high self-esteem, and her mother really supported her. She didn't need to use her sexuality to prove anything.

Y-LIFE: *How was your self-esteem when you were a teenager?*

CRAWFORD: I was in pretty good shape. I was good in school. I was active in sports. But I wasn't as together as these kids were.

Y-LIFE: *Are kids any less—or, in fact, more—self-conscious about their looks now?*

CRAWFORD: Probably more.

Y-LIFE: *Is there a changing sense of what it is to be beautiful?*

CRAWFORD: It's always changing, though there is no less of a sense of what we're all supposed to look like. What is fashionable right now is less makeup, but it is still a studied look. It just isn't the high-glam look of the '80s or '50s or whenever.

Y-LIFE: *Do you worry for teenagers preoccupied by beauty?*

CRAWFORD: Definitely. *Reviving Ophelia* [Ballantine Books, 1995] shows how destructive it is. It talks about young women not only with eating disorders but women who are mutilating themselves. They are so lost. I don't think that's only about aesthetics, but there is an unrealistic pressure to look a certain way.

Y-LIFE: *Which you help promote.*

CRAWFORD: You know, I don't even look like my pictures on the magazine covers. When I shoot those covers, I have had two hours of hair and makeup. I have perfect lighting. If I have a zit that day, they retouch it. I look at those pictures and get depressed. Young girls see those pictures and think that's how I wake up looking in the morning. I understand how that would be disheartening. I try to talk about it a lot. I did that when I was on [MTV's] *House of Style*, tried to demystify beauty. But most of how someone feels about themselves comes from their family and their home life. People have to sit down and talk to their kids. They have to create a nurturing, accepting, loving home for them. That's what makes a difference.

Y-LIFE: *But those media images are powerful.*

CRAWFORD: Yeah, but I know a lot of beautiful women who don't feel beautiful, and I know a lot of normal people who have an inner passion and an inner self-esteem that comes out. It's very attractive. *That is beauty.*

INTERNET COMMERCE

a site for this
a store for that
an url for links to other things
maybe

point
click
wait
bail



Or...

Value **AMERICA**

Internet commerce as it was *meant* to be.

IBM. PANASONIC. HEWLETT-PACKARD. COMPAQ. AMANA. KODAK. SHARP. MICROSOFT. SEE ANYBODY YOU RECOGNIZE HERE? WEB. BRAUN. PHILIPS MAGNAVOX. BUSH. EPSON. FISHER MULTIMEDIA. FUJIFILM. 3COM-US ROBOTICS. TENEX. SPALDING. LEXMARK. NO. BOCA RESEARCH. TITLEIST. TAG HEUER. RAM GOLF. ROLODEX. SANFORD. ELGIN. DR. SOLOMON'S. DISNEY INTERACTIVE. PARKER PE. MARTIN YALE. SAMSUNG. PUR. TAYLOR MADE. SEAGATE. FILEMAKER. TEARDROP GOLF. READ RIGHT. PULSAR. RAWLINGS. LORUS. F. RUBBERMAID. SPECTRACOM. HARTMAN LUGGAGE. GLOBAL. INTUIT. HAMMERMILL PAPER. WENGER. UMAX. CURTIS MATHES. SYMA. SHOPVAC. CHANTAL. PELONIS. CALLAWAY GOLF. IMATION. HITACHI. WATERMAN. GRAPHIC UTILITIES. MOVADO. IOMEGA. SIMON & ACCO. C-PHONE. BIC. GET THE POINT? BUSHNELL. PHILIPS LIGHTING. ARMOUR GOLF. CASIO. HEALTH RIDER. TOMBOW. BPI. APC. OI.

What would you think of an Internet store that offered products in more than just



one or two categories, an online



shopping destination that carried hundreds and hundreds of top



brands, a virtual store whose primary reality was customer satisfaction?



Value America is

that Internet store. We're not an auction house,



flea market, or factory outlet. We are, rather, a

unique and



incredibly broad online 'department store' with some important differences that

separate us from the crowd. What are you looking for? Chances are, we have it—computers and office

products, jewelry, sporting goods, home electronics, home improvement,



home furnishings,

housewares, health and beauty...



the list goes on. And because we have direct relationships with

many of the country's most respected manufacturers, you'll never again get caught in the gray-market

what-do-you-mean-the-warranty's-no-good trap.



Our customer service team is always there for

you. 24/7. And prices? Always competitive, often the lowest around, occasionally downright ridiculous.

www.ValueAmerica.com



3M. GE APPLIANCES. ALTEC LANSING. CANON. AVERY. TOSHIBA. TECHNICS. ZENITH. KITCHENAID. TIMEX. SANYO. CASIO PHONEMATE. DURACELL. OLYMPUS. CO. POLAROID. VIEW SONIC. TEXAS INSTRUMENTS. INTERMETRO. BROTHER. ACER. RCA. ACTIVISION. AT-A-GLANCE. FASCINATING FINE PRINT. NO? ADOBE. WILSON. AKER. COREL. NEC. MATTTEL MEDIA. UUNET. CROSS PENS. META CREATIONS. DAY-TIMER. TRIPP LITE. VISIO. CULLIGAN. DELONGHI. TOP FLITE. CYBERMEDIA. SAFCO. HOOVER. CURTIS. WEST BEND. SINGER. IGLOO. MITSUBISHI. PING. SIRCO. DEWALT. STEBCO. THE BATTERY STORE. GLOBAL VILLAGE. MCAFEE. KELLYREST. HUFFY. STERN DIGITAL. BISSEL. XIRCOM. JETFILL. 3COM-MEGAHERTZ. KENSINGTON. TEAM CONCEPTS. INTUIT. SHALL I GO ON? VERBATIM. CONGOLEUM. HASBRO. KWIKSET. R INTERACTIVE. TARGUS. OXFORD. KINGSTON TECHNOLOGY. SENTRY. PANAMAX. GREAT WHITE. COBRA. ADIDAS. POWER QUEST. SL WABER. ORIGIN. INTERPLAY. T DATA. SEAGATE. SURVIVOR. PENDAFLEX. DELTA FAUCET. DIAMOND MULTIMEDIA. BLACK & DECKER. AND SO MANY MORE IT WOULD MAKE YOUR HEAD SWIM...

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JOHN RILEY/ONYX STONE

CURE SPEAKER'S BLOCK

Feeling at a loss for words—the night before you're to give Aunt Edina's eulogy? Aphorisms Galore! will help fill in the blanks for most any speech. This archive houses nearly 2,000 aphorisms, and it's much more up to date than the 1901 edition of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* that's been living on the Web for a while. Search through it by either author or keyword, or browse such categories as Law and Politics, Wealth and Poverty, and Altruism and Cynicism. Though it's sure to sharpen your wit, remember what Voltaire said: "A witty saying proves nothing."

www.aphorismsgalore.com

STAY SAFE AT WORK

You don't have to work at a nuclear-power plant to be at risk in the workplace. Search the

Occupational Safety & Health Administration Statistics & Data site by establishment, location, or inspection date to find out if your home away from home houses any hazards. The listings make note of inspections and any "interventions," as well as cite specific complaints. (Did someone report the lack of fire extinguishers in your restaurant's kitchen?) You'll also find charts of aggregated nationwide workplace-injury and illness statistics, which serve as good reminders that you should be careful no matter where you toil.

www.osha.gov/oshstats

WHO'S PROTECTING YOUR RIGHTS?

You don't have to be a card-carrying liberal to find out how your elected officials are voting on civil-liberties issues. Enter your state name or ZIP code, or the name of your congressional representative, into the ACLU National Freedom Scorecard page, and you'll get a table showing how he or she voted on such issues as school prayer, voting rights, and campaign financing. Know your rights—and go to the polls as an informed citizen. scorecard.aclu.org

FIND A FINER WINE

If your preferred wine comes in a foil-clad box with a pull tab, consider visiting the *Wine Spectator's* Wine Search pages for some new ideas. The best aspect of using this expert adviser is that in order to receive its informed opinions, you don't need to know much more about vino than how much you want to spend and whether you're looking for red or white. Search by price, reviewer's score, type (merlot, zinfandel, etc.), vintage, or region. Each matching entry includes colorful comments from *Wine Spectator* reviewers—which you can rip off shamelessly as you host your first wine-and-cheese party.

www.winespectator.com/Wine/Spectator/notes



ELECTRIFY YOUR BUSINESS CARD

Regardless of how complete a Nethead you've become, you still need stationery once in a while. You know—*paper*? The iPrint design studio lets you fiddle with a



multitude of layouts, fonts, and graphics as you craft business cards, letterhead, and envelopes online. Once you've picked some styles, you can have iPrint send the electronic files to a local printer, who will complete the job. The site also features designs for mouse pads and other promotional items that iPrint can personalize

for your business. *Fee-based service.*

www.iprint.com

FOIL THE CRIMINALS

With all the headlines these days about a nationwide decrease in crime, it's easy to be complacent about preventive measures—that is, unless you're

Each month, we gather all the sites we think offer wonderfully practical services

McGruff, the anticrime dog. His Children page on the National Crime Prevention Council's Web site uses games, quizzes, and such guides as If You Find a Gun to teach the little ones how to avoid criminals and unsafe situations. Good dog.

www.ncpc.org/child.htm

ASK AN EXPERT

Every family has a know-it-all. But what do you do when your resident swami is out of town? Allexperts.com provides a live human response from an expert in the field. Ask a question, and you'll get an answer by e-mail from one of the volunteer brains-in-residence here—art buffs, computer whizzes, travel experts, and auto-repair specialists, among others. They might not be able to explain man's inhumanity to man, but they can probably offer some wisdom about your Toyota's braking problem.

www.allexperts.com

PATENT YOUR INVENTION

One of the financial drawbacks of being an inventor is hiring a lawyer to secure trademark protection. Now you can use the Web to make your Tsunami water gun or WeDoWindows cleaning service a legitimate entity. The

Trademark Electronic Application System from the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) lets you fill out an application online (attaching graphics files of your trademark logo if you wish) and submit it directly to the USPTO. Once it's approved, you can start adding that coveted "circled R" to your ads.

Fee-based service.

www.uspto.gov/teas

BEAT THE STREET

Don't you wish you could have got in early on those soaring tech stocks—back when the prices were still in the single digits? The key is to find out about the initial public offerings (IPOs) of these securities *before* they're announced. Alert-IPO! can give you a head start. Look here to read IPO filings months before the companies in question actually "go public." These filings typically include the offering's share price, the number of shares being offered, and the names of the



various underwriters. It's also where you'll learn about withdrawn and postponed IPOs. Get free weekly summaries, or pay for a daily report.

www.ostman.com/alert-ipo

BROADCAST TO BEEPERS

It seems that everyone has either a beeper or a cellular phone now. And though it's not so easy to chat with a cell-phone user from your

Web browser, you can use SkyTel's Send a Message! service to "beep" a SkyTel pager subscriber. Use SkyTel's special Web service to set up an address book

for groups of up to 50 recipients, and if you're a SkyTel customer, you can be notified via e-mail when someone is trying to reach you. It's just one more way the Net is making sure that you'll never be alone.

Fee-based service.

www.skytel.com/Paging

SPEED UP YOUR SITE

If you've crafted a Web site that loads slowly enough to generate hate e-mail, consult Net-Mechanic's Load Time Check for some relief. Submit your URL to this site, and you'll get back an analysis showing your page's load time for connection speeds ranging from 14.4Kbps to T1. The site also reports the downloading efficiency of all objects (photos or other artwork) and server connections within your page. When the service finds offensively obese graphics, its GIFBot tool can help you slim down the perpetrators. Human weight control should be this manageable.

www.netmechanic.com

Send us news of your useful find! Write us at useful@zd.com. And be sure to check our past picks at www.incrediblyuseful.com. 



AMERICA'S

50 MOST WIRED CITIES... AND TOWNS

Relax, San Francisco, you're still No. 1. It may not come as a surprise that the City by the Bay again outdistanced the competition in our annual Most Wired Cities survey. But the rankings of such cities as Austin, Texas (No. 2!), and Boston (No. 4) suggest that in judging Net-friendliness, nothing should be taken for granted.

Though last year's top spot remains unchanged, our methodology shifted this year, thanks to improved statistical resources. (Thus, comparisons with last year may mislead.) The biggest change? Instead of measuring just cities themselves, we used newly available statistics on metropolitan areas, which take into account the suburbs. Add to that a streamlining of some criteria, and the end result is an even more accurate picture of the nation's wired peaks and valleys.

Most surfers agree that cyberspace is the place. But which real-world locations make the most of the Net?

We put America's cities and towns to the test, and found that the Golden Gate is still golden if you're online. But other cities are gaining fast

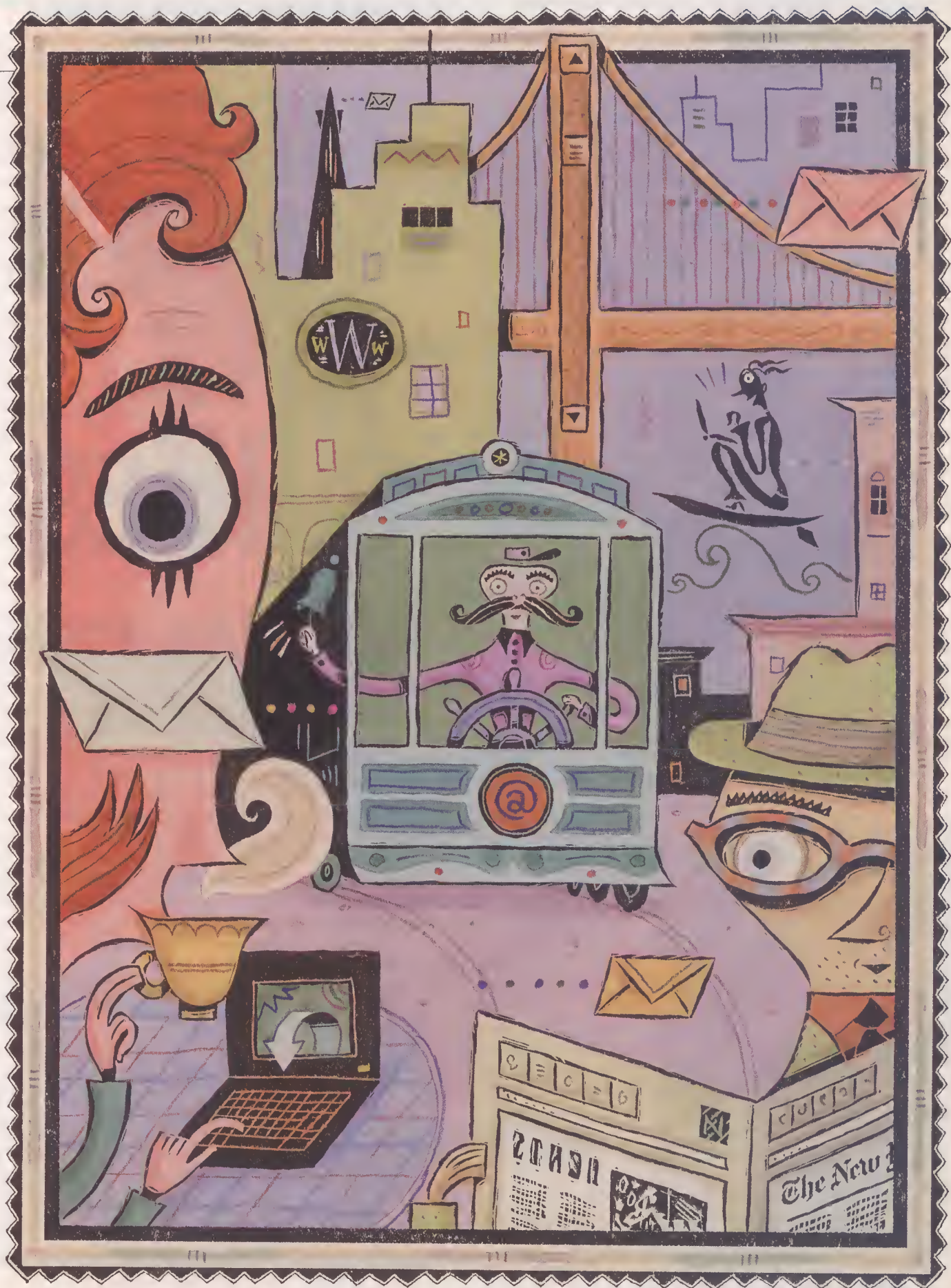
<< HOME & WORK NET USE >>

Who in your city is online? To find out, we turned to the Current Population Survey, a public data set collected and distributed jointly by the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Austin, Texas, came out on top in terms of home Net use, with 32.4 percent going online from their dens. When it came to folks logging on from the office, San Jose, California, was the winner, boasting 37.9 percent.

<< DOMAIN DENSITY >>

Domain density may sound daunting. It's not. The statistic simply measures the number of commercial (i.e., .com) domain names in a particular area divided by the overall number of businesses. We obtained this data from Matthew Zook, a Ph.D.-to-be at the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of California at Berkeley. According to Zook, "domains per firms" is a better

BY THE EDITORS >> ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM MCCAULEY



measure of a metro's wiredness because businesses, more so than individuals, are responsible for the majority of domain-name registrations. Jed Kolko, a doctoral candidate in economics at Harvard University who is researching the geography of commercial Internet usage, agrees that "domains per firms" is a better measure of wiredness. "Looking at 'domains per capita' mixes together 'wiredness' with the level of general business activity in a city," Kolko says. So who won this horse race? San Jose, with 692 domains for every 1,000 businesses.

<< HOSTS PER CAPITA >>

As in last year's survey, we obtained this data set from Matrix Information and Directory Services (MIDS), an Austin, Texas-based firm that tracks Internet usage. But what, exactly, *is* a host? Any computer connected to the Internet. But as John S. Quarterman, president of MIDS, notes, a host is more than that: "It's any node that users—people—use to access the Internet." And what is a node? "Any computer connected to the Internet"—in other words, a host, a server (a computer that serves data across the Internet), or even a router (a computer that routes traffic across the Internet). So when we're using "hosts per capita" as a criterion of wiredness, what we're really measuring is the density of computers in a given metro area where people can actually access the Internet, added to the number of infrastructural machines. Our winner this year is San Francisco, where there are a whopping 13,000 computers to access the Net for every 1,000 individuals. No other metro area even comes close.

<< DIRECTORY DENSITY >>

Technical and statistical measurements are all well and good, but what about common-sense measurements, such as the number of Web sites devoted to a particular city? By counting the number of Web sites devoted to a city and dividing by population, we determined

that Austin, Texas, was the winner, with more than five sites for every 1,000 people.

<< CONTENT QUALITY >>

In this category, we analyzed government, media, and cultural sites and assigned them overall rankings. Several metro areas scored perfect "10"s for content—notably, Boston, Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C.

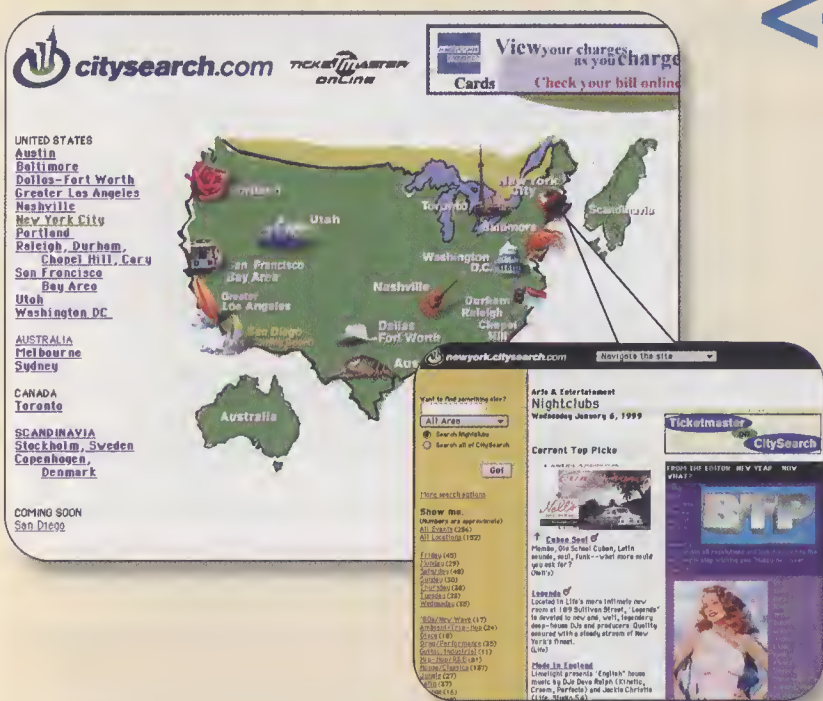
MOST WIRED CITY GUIDES

City guides are evolving from Saturday-night-date planners to daily urban living

bibles **BY DAVID LIDSKY**

Remember high school? In ninth grade, you were the most popular boy in school. Then you came back from summer vacation, and the fellas who had grown six inches and whose faces had cleared up were now stealing *your* spotlight. That's basically what happened to city guides this past year. As the Web surrendered to the big e-commerce portals, the sites that told you what was happening in your town were wearing last year's styles. City guides struggled this year, trying to find themselves in the big clique that is the Web. CitySearch hooked up with Zip2, but they broke up; and then CitySearch fell in love with Ticketmaster Online. Meanwhile, Microsoft decided (again) that it didn't want to be on the original-content team, got rid of much of its editorial staff, and turned Sidewalk into a buying guide powered by Redmond-based technology and filled with third-party content. Other companies hid in the lockers of their corporate parents, waiting to be cool again. But even though they're not the "it" boys, they still have a reason to live. Here's who's left and where they stand.





CitySearch.com and other online guides offer plenty of incentive to get out of the house.

buy a TV; can save searches and notable pages with internal Your Favorite bookmarks; its home and car finders are the excellent HomeAdvisor and MSN CarPoint, respectively.

WHAT'S NOT: Covers about 75 cities, but if you don't live in one of the 10 major burgs where Sidewalk produces original content, the site—especially the entertainment section—feels like the yellow pages with a slick book cover on it; no job classifieds or local news, as can be found at other sites.

BEST BETS: New York; Seattle; Washington, D.C.; these and other vestiges of the original Sidewalk are the only ones that offer any sense that you're at a city site.

YAHOO! GET LOCAL

DIR.YAHOO.COM/REGIONAL/U S STATES

WHAT'S HOT: Locations, locations, locations—enter your ZIP code, and you've got a guide, no matter how small your hometown.

WHAT'S NOT: No editorial recommendations without venturing outside Yahoo!; only 12 cities have a Yahoo! Metro, which is a more fleshed-out Get Local.

BEST BETS: If you're comfortable getting around Yahoo!, you'll be fine here for the basics, particularly if you live where most city guides fear to tread.

ZIP2

WWW.ZIP2.COM

WHAT'S HOT: A-list editorial partners (*The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The Miami Herald*); saves multiple user addresses (such as those for your home and office) so you can find the events closest to you.

WHAT'S NOT: Has 160 newspaper affiliates, but only about 14 have most of the bells and whistles; entertainment content is sparse. Its national house-and-job-hunting guides are nothing special.

BEST BETS: Zip2-powered Boston.com and New York Today may be the single best city guides in the country, but most sites can't match these lofty standards.

David Lidsky is associate editor, *Internet*, at PC Magazine.

CITYSEARCH.COM

WWW.CITYSEARCH.COM

WHAT'S HOT: Fresh content, both original and partnered (*The Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*); the Scout service, which offers e-mail updates on cultural and sporting events.

WHAT'S NOT: Listings are sometimes spotty, particularly if you're not looking in a trendy part of town; not much evidence of CitySearch's merger with Ticketmaster Online, since online ticketing was available only in a handful of cities.

BEST BETS: Old-style sites still the best; guides built in to newspaper sites lack the same edge and depth. Check out New York City, San Francisco, and Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

COX INTERACTIVE MEDIA

WWW.CIMEOIA.COM/SITES.HTML

WHAT'S HOT: Individualized look and feel for each of the 20-plus city guides, which are more like community sites, with home pages for civic groups, traffic cams, and active message boards; focus on such smaller cities as Syracuse, N.Y., and Waco, Texas, along with the usual suspects.

WHAT'S NOT: Poor site design will trap you deep in the sections here; some cities lack some of the city-guide basics, such as links to reviews

when you search for a restaurant or movie.

BEST BETS: Definitely for locals rather than tourists, but great virtual town halls. Check out AccessAtlanta.com, SanDiegoInsider.com, and News-Journal.com (East Texas).

DIGITAL CITY

WWW.DIGITALCITY.COM

WHAT'S HOT: Easy to see what's hot in your town, with Top 10 lists of most-requested events, restaurants; chat boards; a few cities offer virtual neighborhoods where you can build a home page.

WHAT'S NOT: Annoyingly opens up new browser windows as you dig for info; only a few of the 50-plus cities get more than boilerplate content (news, weather, local links, yellow pages, and ties to the national resources for entertainment reviews and classifieds).

BEST BETS: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and South Florida are the few places where some effort is made to tailor the site to the community.

MSN SIDEWALK

NATIONAL.SIDEWALK.MSN.COM

WHAT'S HOT: An impressive Buyer's Guide helps you do everything from find a doctor to

TOP WIRED CITIES '99

CITY/METROPOLITAN AREA	POPULATION	TOTAL PTS.	HOME	WORK	.COM	HOSTS	LINKS	CONTENT
1 San Francisco, CA	1,655,454	49.2	6.1	7.7	7.9	10	7.5	10
2 Austin, TX	1,041,330	44	10	8.1	5.9	3	10	7
3 Seattle, WA	2,234,707	39.7	5.8	6.8	4.8	3.1	9.2	10
4 Washington, D.C.	4,563,123	39.7	7.3	8.3	6.1	3.1	4.9	10
5 Boston, MA	3,263,060	38.7	6.1	7	5.6	3	7	10
6 San Jose, CA	1,599,604	36.7	7.8	10	10	3.7	3.2	2
7 San Diego, CA	2,655,463	30.4	5.4	5.2	6.2	3.1	3.5	7
8 Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	2,765,116	30.4	6.5	6	4.4	3.1	4.4	6
9 Atlanta, GA	3,541,230	30.3	6.4	5.8	4.6	3	4.5	6
10 Dallas-Fort Worth, TX	4,574,561	30	6.2	5.6	4.3	3	3.9	7
11 Denver, CO	1,866,978	29.9	7.7	6.1	3.4	3	3.7	6
12 Sacramento, CA	1,482,208	29.2	6.4	5.5	3.9	3	4.4	6
13 Orange County, CA	2,636,888	29	5.9	5.3	5.2	3	3.6	6
14 Chicago, IL	7,733,876	27.7	4.1	4.3	3.5	3	2.8	10
15 Portland, OR	1,758,937	27.6	5.2	6.3	5.1	3	4	4
16 New York, NY	8,643,437	27.5	4.3	4.3	4	3	1.9	10
17 Nashville, TN	1,117,178	27.3	7.7	5.4	3.7	3	2.5	5
18 Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, NC	1,025,253	26.9	5.4	6.7	3.9	3.1	3.8	4
19 Phoenix, AZ	2,746,703	26.7	5.8	4.5	4.1	3.1	3.2	6
20 Baltimore, MD	2,474,118	26.6	6.7	6.1	2.4	3	2.4	6
21 Philadelphia, PA	4,952,929	26	4.3	4.5	3.7	3	2.5	8
22 Oakland, CA	2,209,629	25.9	7.4	7.9	4.7	3.1	0.8	2
23 Cincinnati, OH	1,597,352	25.8	5.7	6	3.2	3	1.9	6
24 Los Angeles, CA	9,127,751	25.7	4.5	4.4	4.7	3	1.1	8
25 Salt Lake City, UT	1,217,842	25.3	5.6	6.3	3.6	3	3.8	3
26 Houston, TX	4,253,428	25	4.4	5.7	3.7	3	2.2	6
27 Detroit, MI	4,318,145	24.5	4.9	4.7	2.5	3	1.4	8
28 Miami, FL	2,076,175	24.5	3.7	3.6	4.2	3	5	5
29 Columbus, OH	1,447,646	23.6	6.2	6.1	3.3	3.1	1.9	3
30 Cleveland, OH	2,233,288	23.2	4.5	4.4	3	3	2.3	6
31 Milwaukee, WI	1,457,655	22.3	5.2	3.4	2.3	3	2.4	6
32 Indianapolis, IN	1,492,297	22.2	5.7	5.4	3.1	3	2	3
33 Orlando, FL	1,417,291	22.2	4.5	4.4	4.2	3.1	4	2
34 Rochester, NY	1,088,037	21.9	4.3	6.5	2.3	3	1.8	4
35 Dayton, OH	950,661	21.6	4.8	5.7	2.5	3	1.6	4
36 Kansas City, MO-KS	1,690,343	21.6	4.9	5	2.9	3	1.8	4
37 Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL	2,199,231	21.3	5.6	4.9	2.9	3.1	2.8	2
38 Oklahoma City, OK	1,026,657	21	6.3	5.8	2.1	3	1.8	2
39 Las Vegas, NV	1,201,073	20.2	4.4	2.4	5.2	3	2.2	3
40 Pittsburgh, PA	2,379,411	20.1	3.3	3.9	2.3	3	1.6	6
41 Norfolk-Virginia Beach, VA	1,540,252	19.6	6.4	4.6	2.2	3	0.4	3
42 St. Louis, MO	2,548,238	19.6	4.3	5.1	2.7	3	1.5	3
43 New Orleans, LA	1,312,890	19.4	3.8	3.1	2.2	3	2.3	5
44 Hartford, CT	1,144,574	18.7	3.9	4.3	2.8	3	3.7	1
45 West Palm Beach-Boca Raton, FL	992,840	18.1	3.6	3.7	3.8	3	3	1
46 Providence, RI	1,124,044	17.7	4.1	4	2.3	3	2.3	2
47 Jacksonville, FL	1,008,633	18	6.1	2.6	1.6	3.9	2.4	1
48 Greensboro-Winston-Salem, NC	1,141,238	17.5	3.5	4	1.5	3	1.5	4
49 Louisville, KY	991,765	16.7	3.1	2.9	2.1	3	1.6	4
50 Charlotte, NC	1,321,068	16.6	3.5	3.5	2.2	3	2.4	2

Description of chart categories: Population is based on standard Metropolitan Area figures. HOME=residential Net use; WORK=business Net use; COM=density of Net businesses; HOSTS=density of networked computers; LINKS=density of city-specific links; CONTENT=quality of city-related resources online. Chart scores are awarded on a scale from 1 to 10.

Forget Rice-a-Roni. The Internet is the real San Francisco treat. But how did America's other most wired cities fare?

COMMENTS

Still the most wired place overall, and far and away the densest in terms of hosts
 A high concentration of high-tech firms pushes the home of Dell Computer into the No. 2 spot
 Cybersavvy creative types putting up lots of content. Being the home of Microsoft doesn't hurt
 Quality content and a highly wired government population put the nation's capital in the Top 5
 There are tons of sites about the city and a healthy population of wired university students
 The hub of Silicon Valley makes a strong showing in Net use at work
 A strong dose of telecommunications, biotech, and software firms propels San Diego up the list
 More than one-fifth of the population stays home and goes online. Maybe it's the winters
 Better than average content, but lower than average domain density
 Content seems to be improving, but it still doesn't measure up to Austin's
 A leader in telecommunications infrastructure, with one of the most tech-literate populations in the nation
 It's risen since last year, thanks to better than average content and a higher percentage of Net use
 Statistically separate from Los Angeles, this Southern California county is more wired than the City of Angels
 Great content boosted the rating of this central metro, even though it's just average on other fronts
 More domains per firm than its Pacific Northwestern counterpart, but far fewer sites about the city
 A huge population, but handicapped by directory density; great content couldn't make up the difference
 A thriving country-music scene plus a respectable university population give Nashville a leg up
 North Carolina's Research Triangle is boosted by—what else?—research
 It's not the heat, it's the Internet activity. Content is smoldering, too
 Holding steady with better than average content and Internet use
 Twice the size of Baltimore, but not quite so wired overall
 A tremendous amount of Net use makes up for a dearth of decent Web sites
 Beats other Ohio metros, thanks to better Web sites and more Net use
 Terrific cultural sites, but its sprawling unwired population holds the city down
 This metro makes a strong showing in its debut on this year's list
 Solid content, decent percentages of Net use. Perhaps its large population is the problem
 Content rating got a boost from car dealers offering state-of-the-art sites
 When this metro's dwellers get off the beach, they tend to go online
 A higher percentage of Internet users helped this metro beat Cleveland
 Better content than Columbus's couldn't tip the scales over its Ohio rivals
 Good sports and cultural sites, and a sizable student population
 This metro took a tumble since last year. More and better Web sites might have helped
 With Mickey Mouse online, this metro made its debut on the list in a not-too-shabby spot
 High proportion of surfers accessing the Net from work
 Far more people use the Net at work here than at home
 The plethora of educational institutions with a Net presence helped
 Recreational Net use takes precedence over business-related usage
 More than one-fifth of its population using the Net elevates this metro
 Online gambling helps, but people who live in this metro probably prefer the real-life version
 The locals produce good Web sites; they should log on more often to look at them
 Improved Net-use stats are lending a hand to this metro's rise in the ranks
 High numbers of domain registrations are tempered by equally high numbers of firms
 An active nightlife culture tends to offset Internet use
 An unusually high directory density helped this metro make it onto the Most Wired list
 Makes a strong showing for its domain density
 This city makes the list thanks to respectable Net-usage figures
 Great scores on hosts, both in raw numbers and per capita
 The fact that this metro has relatively few Net-related businesses held it down
 More businesses—such as UPS—are getting wired all the time here
 A bigger population than other North Carolina metros, but sites that are not quite up to par

SAN FRANCISCO: RON THOMAS/PPG; AUSTIN: DAVID A. BARNES/PPG

TOP 10 LISTS



Percentage of adults using the Net at home

1 Austin, TX	32.4
2 San Jose, CA	25.1
3 Denver, CO	25.0
4 Nashville, TN	24.8
5 Oakland, CA	24.0
6 Washington, D.C.	23.5
7 Baltimore, MD	21.7
8 Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	21.2
9 Atlanta, GA	20.7
10 Norfolk-Virginia Beach, VA	20.6

(Source: J. Kolko, using data from Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Oct. 1997)

Percentage of adults using the Net at work

1 San Jose, CA	37.9
2 Washington, D.C.	31.4
3 Austin, TX	30.7
4 Oakland, CA	29.9
5 San Francisco, CA	29.0
6 Boston, MA	26.7
7 Seattle, WA	25.6
8 Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, NC	25.5
9 Rochester, NY	24.8
10 Portland, OR	23.8

(Source: J. Kolko, using data from Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, Oct. 1997)

Directory density (sites per 1,000 capita)

1 Austin, TX	5.31
2 Seattle, WA	4.86
3 San Francisco, CA	3.97
4 Boston, MA	3.50
5 Miami, FL	2.66
6 Washington, D.C.	2.59
7 Atlanta, GA	2.38
8 Sacramento, CA	2.36
9 Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	2.33
10 Orlando, FL	2.13

(Source: Y-Life)

Hosts per 1,000 capita

1 San Francisco, CA	13,000
2 Jacksonville, FL	1,100
3 San Jose, CA	880
4 Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN	83
5 Oakland, CA	100
6 Tampa-St. Petersburg, FL	98
7 Seattle, WA	78
8 Orlando, FL	75
9 Washington, D.C.	66
10 Phoenix, AZ	64

(Source: MIDS, www.mids.org)

DOIN' THE TOWNS

What effect is the global village having on American villages? To find out, we paid a visit to some of the country's most wired small towns

BY MICHAEL FREIDSON



CELEBRATION, FLORIDA



ORACLE, ARIZONA



SOLDOTNA, ALASKA

SOLDOTNA, AK

POP. 3,482

Town crier: Mayor Ken Lancaster

What's new: This fishing community on the Kenai Peninsula is installing fiber-optic cable to facilitate teleconferencing among city, state, and schools. But Lancaster, who also works as a Realtor, says he longs for the good old days: "The old cash register was a lot simpler and quicker," he says of the newfangled electronic model. "But I'm old-school, I guess."

Is it true that everyone in town is pasty-

-faced and bleary-eyed from staring at computer screens? "Well, I guess there is some of that," Lancaster says. "Prior to a council meeting, some of the employees will stay at city hall [and play computerized] ticktacktoe or whatever. I'm not thrilled with that."

SHEPHERDSTOWN, WV

POP. 1,287

Town crier: Mayor Vincent Parmesano

What's new: The community still depends on Internet provider Intrepid Technologies and new

resident Ultraprise (formerly HuskyLabs) for its wired reputation, but more of the town's organizations are logging on and developing Web pages. "Even the dinky public library we have has one of their own now," says Parmesano.

Busta Rhymes and Barbra Streisand have both expressed concern about the Year 2000 (Y2K) Problem. Are you scared? "We're aware," Parmesano says. "Traffic lights are controlled by computer chips, and the timing may go off—but we don't have any traffic lights. There are some advantages to being a small town."

CEDAR CITY, UT**POP. 13,443**

Town crier: Director of Economic Development Brent Drew

What's new: By 2000, this touristy town will have an asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) switch installed. The new technology, which will facilitate the linking of computers to a high-speed data network, is necessary because of the popularity of IronNet, the electronic village started by local Southern Utah University. "Our goal is to have every single city map, every application, right there," says Drew.

Does everyone in your town have carpal tunnel syndrome? "If you had asked us about that...three years ago," Drew says, "nobody would have known what you were talking about. But we have started to see damages here. Not that many."

MIDDLETOWN, RI**POP. 19,460**

Town crier: Town Administrator Michael Embury

What's new: Not too much. The town government's online presence, noted here last year, is still growing. And residents are starting to log on—but slowly. "There's still some folks who say: 'Here's a box. It sits on my desk at home. What do you mean I need to be networked?'" notes Embury.

Rhode Island is responsible for both Middletown and the Farrelly brothers. Which is more valuable? "Probably the Farrelly brothers," Embury says. "People seem to pay more attention to them."

ARKADELPHIA, AR**POP. 10,014**

Town crier: City Manager Jim McAlister

What's new: Late last year, the town became the smallest of five Arkansas communities selected for a statewide fiber-optics experiment that would connect all government, educational, and commercial resources. As part of that initiative, a new, wired city hall is in the cards for Arkadelphia. "I don't see people hibernating at all, withdrawing to their rooms to get lost in cyberspace," says McAlister. "I see a very active and vibrant community."

As you're from Arkansas, have you followed the Clinton coverage on the Web? "I had a publication come to me across the Web that identifies some 20 to 30 people who supposedly died as a result of their association with the president," McAlister says. "It's hard to tell whether those things are fact or fiction."



Labor of Lusk: Dave Linn (with staffer Joy Smith) moved his printing business to Wyoming in 1997.

AUBURN, AL**POP. 33,830**

Town crier: Director of Information Technology Jim Buston

What's new: More cable, as fiber optics connect the schools to the city. And according to Buston, Auburn University is still "a major player in this area, as far as being wired."

How could the Net have helped Eva Gabor's character on *Green Acres*? "She could be out there, wouldn't give her husband any problems, she could shop online," Buston says. "Mr. Haney could deliver the stuff. And with *Babe* and everything, Arnold the Pig would be a star."

CELEBRATION, FL**POP. 1,500**

Town crier: Manager of Network Development Amy Westwood

What's new: E-mail addresses and Internet accounts come with every home, and soon every house will be connected to a community network via cable modem. Would you expect any less from a town created by Disney and AT&T? "We're probably above the curve when you look at general literacy across the country," says Westwood.

Pop singer John Cougar Mellencamp once sang about living and dying in a small town. How would the Web have changed his outlook? "He'd probably stay in that town because he had a window to the world," Westwood says. "And even though it might be a small town, he got what he needed there as far as a sense of caring, and then he

was able to tap the resources of the rest of the world through the Internet."

LUSK, WY**POP. 1,504**

Town crier: Mayor Mark Lohr

What's new: Recently the Center of Excellence in Rural America designated Lusk a CERA community, owing partly to its wiring. Still, the town—well connected thanks to a \$295,000 grant a few years back—is not sure where to go next. "I cannot tell you glowing things about additional pick-up and usage," says Lohr, elected mayor last June. "But we're certainly going forward."

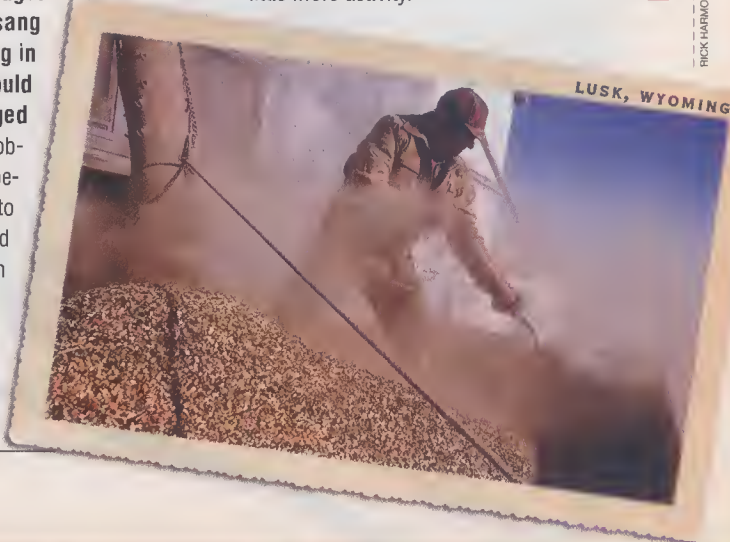
Microsoft has filmed commercials in your town. Does that mean Bill Gates is not the devil? "I called him, and I said, 'I'm calling you to say thank you,'" recalls Lohr. "I said: 'If you have any more projects that you're interested in, I want you to know we're interested. You might wear the black hat in Washington, but in our community you wear the white hat.'"

ORACLE, AZ**POP. 3,043**

Town crier: Town Hall Executive Assistant Jan Aalberts

What's new: Columbia University's Biosphere 2 keeps this tiny burg plugged in, although the 'Sphere's technicians and nonbubble staffers live in nearby Tucson. Still, says Aalberts, "most of the people I spend time with and energy around in this community are online. That's what I know."

The Biosphere 2 people do not let the townsfolk use their computers. Have you ever wanted to sneak in? "Well, you can look right down on it," Aalberts says. "From a long distance, it looks like a big bubble. Odd-shaped. But actually I have considered leaving here for a little while and just living in a place where there's a little more activity."



PHOTOGRAPH BY RICK HARMON (2)

THE GREAT AMERICAN CAR CHASE

THE INTERNET'S TRANSFORMING EFFECT ON CAR BUYERS
CHANGES THE RULES OF THE ROAD AS AUTOMAKERS AND
DEALERS RACE TO A NEW FINISH LINE





Though many car shoppers find themselves exhausted, in therapy, or driven to drink after days spent with dealers, Rob Mapes describes his recent buying experience with refreshing sobriety. "It was kind of like giving my dentist a root canal," says the Silicon Valley-based writer and engineer, not hiding his satisfaction. After purchasing two cars the traditional way, Mapes bought his third with the Internet in his holster. And he found this showdown far different from the others.

"I knew the exact car I wanted, so the dealer thought he already had me behind the wheel," he says. "But when I opened my folder, which was filled with Web reference information, I could actually see the guy physically regroup. It was like he went from thinking, 'Hey, easy sale,' to, 'Damn—no profit!' in zero to sixty."

Three years ago, Mapes would have sounded like a brave pioneer of the digital car lot. Today, he's just another 34-year-old with a browser and the desire to have a better hand in negotiating a big-ticket item. Indeed, helped by the huge number of tools that have cropped up on the Net to aid buyers, people like Mapes are altering the automotive retail landscape.

According to Autoshipper.com, a recent study by market-research firm **J.D. Power and Associates** of how new-vehicle buyers are using the Internet to help them make their purchases, some 3.25 million of these shoppers rely on the Net to snatch vehicle and pricing information. That's 25 percent of the estimated 13 million "personal use" cars sold each year in the United States. J.D. Power also identified automotive Internet shoppers as "young, affluent, and willing to put the time in to obtain the right vehicle at the right price."

The study predicts that the portion of buyers who use the Internet will grow by a steady 3 percentage points per year, and found that Internet-savvy buyers who use dealer-invoice information save an average of \$1,000 per sale over traditional car buyers. But it's the makeup of the audience that most interests Chris Denove, the director of the Autoshipper.com study. "The original developers of the online car-sales sites thought they'd attract legions of people seeking convenience in the car-buying process," he says. "But the truth is actually the reverse of that. The people using online services are active and aggressive. The people with Net access who *don't* log on when preparing to buy a car [29 percent] are more convenience-oriented and leave more in the hands of the dealer."

A huge number of sites are now available to car buyers, including those maintained by manufacturers (you can generally enter *carname.com* to find what you're looking for) as well as such independent sites as **Autobytel.com**, **AutoVantage**, **Autoweb.com**, and **CarPoint**. Also indispensable to the buyer are such reference sites as **Car and Driver Online**, **Edmund's**, and **Kelley Blue Book**—not to mention such online loan-assistance sites as **CarFinance.com** and **PeopleFirst Finance**.

Using combinations of these sites, prospective buyers can access detailed information about almost any kind of car, including safety reports, reviews, specifications, negotiation strategies, rewards programs, and the controversial dealer-invoice prices on cars and their options. "Buyers now have so much information at their fingertips after one hour of online research," says Denove, that they're often "more informed about a particular vehicle than even the most sophisticated salesperson."

In general, online car buyers appear to be taking aggressive advantage of their new working knowledge of dealer pricing and the car-buying process. As a result, dealers have had

B Y S E A N K E L L Y
P H O T O I L L U S T R A T I O N B Y G E N E B R E S S L E R

to adjust. The average \$1,000 per car that J.D. Power says buyers save by using the dealer-invoice information available on the Internet is coming directly out of the dealer's bottom line.

In some cases, new-car dealers complain, the cars purchased by Internet users may even have been sold at a loss—turning a profit only later, in parts and service. But for the average new-car dealer, that's a problem that predates the Web. The dealership financial-trends report from the **National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA)** claims that new-car profits have been slim to nonexistent for more than a decade. "The typical dealer's new-vehicle department remains a break-even operation at best," the report states, while "service and parts department profits accounted for 59 percent of total dealership profits in 1997."

The Web may not be the only reason car dealers are sucking wind in new-car sales, but it's certainly a factor. And for the smaller dealers, *any* new variable contributing to reduced margins can spell disaster. Though large automotive outlets can make up the difference in volume sales and elaborate service facilities, small dealers get cut out of the picture—sometimes closing, sometimes consolidating. According to a variety of industry sources, this is all part of the harsh, Darwinian law affecting dealers as a species, and satisfies a natural need for attrition. NADA reports that the number of dealers in the United States has declined in steady fashion since 1973 by a total of nearly 25 percent.

Today, North America sports fewer than 23,000 dealers. James McQuivey, senior analyst of online retail strategies at **Forrester Research**, a Cambridge, Mass.-based consultancy, believes that number will drop even further, to 15,000, within 10 years. "Dealer numbers have fallen naturally for years because of things like the quality of individual dealerships, competition, and consumer demand for new cars," McQuivey says. "But now, because the information available on the Net is turning buyers into more-knowledgeable negotiators, dealers are struggling to survive even more pressures associated with reduced margins."

Just how much pressure are dealers really facing as a result of the Net? Although 25 percent of all new-car buyers use the Net before making a purchase, 75 percent still buy cars the way they

always have—entirely off-line. And NADA, the research voice of dealers, doesn't even mention the Net in its financial-impact reports.

To take the temperature of dealers, *Y-Life* informally talked to 10 of them in the San Francisco area about their perceptions of the Internet and its effect on their operations. Eight of the 10 agreed that the Net has had a significant impact on the way they do business. Six said the Net has affected commissions. Of those six, all said they'd experienced reduced margins per car—but two reported that their overall commissions were *higher* as a result of the increased volume of leads that the Net was handing them.

Two dealers claimed that the Net is doing a disservice to buyers—either because, as one said, it "creates too much confusion based on the wrong information it publishes," or, as Alex Lawson of Marin Mazda-Subaru argued: "Online-buying sites do an extremely poor job serving a new customer. Try one. I've tried to buy three cars online and have never once been called back." (While testing car-buying sites for a comprehensive review to appear in an upcoming

issue, *Y-Life* found that roughly 70 percent of all such sites queried responded within 48 hours.)

Some dealers described their negotiations with Net-savvy buyers as "tense." One extremely frustrated (and rather discriminatory) dealer put it in even harsher terms: "I refuse to deal either with buyers on the Internet or the Chinese. They're both cut from the same cloth. Both know exactly what they want and will go to great costs to get it." The more optimistic dealers, however, see the Net as a means of developing new business opportunities and creating a more open common ground between buyer and seller.

Mark Lorimer, president and chief executive of Autobyte.com, believes that kind of perspective is a recipe for success. "Being open and honest about pricing isn't something most dealers are used to," he concedes. "It represents a shift in how cars are transacted. But if they can make that adjustment and embrace new dealer strategies, they'll find they have tremendous new sales potential."

Operating under that philosophy, Lorimer has enrolled some 2,700 dealer franchises, or more than 12 percent of all those in North America, into his company's network. And although it



Automatic Transmission: *Car and Driver Online* (top), and a Jaguar interior—in 3-D Bubble view—at AutoVantage's virtual showroom.

CLICKING THE TIRES>

Why traipse from auto mall to auto mall when you can do most of your legwork from home, over the Net? Here are the six essential steps every new-car buyer should take before walking into a showroom

START

STEP 1

DECIDE ON A CAR

The most obvious starting point. Visit the online sites of manufacturers offering the cars that meet your needs. Interested in a sport-utility vehicle? Head for such sites as **Jeep International**

and **Toyota**, where you can check out slick photos, specs, incentives, and other info that'll help you narrow your choices. Note that manufacturer sites advertise a vehicle

and its image, so just sell yourself on your favorite style. You'll get to the objective stuff later.

MAKE THE DEAL

Target price in hand, go back to the car-buying sites in Step 3 and submit a request at *each* site to get a good range of quotes. A dealer from each network will call you within an average of 48 hours with a "no-haggle" price on a car in inventory that's closest in options to what you requested.

Now you have two choices: You can either accept one of the quotes and seal the deal, or you can take your target price down to a local dealer and haggle even lower (maybe several hundred dollars lower). There's no guarantee you'll get a lower price, but it may be worth a try.

If you succeed, you'll feel you got the best possible deal around, and you'll laugh all the way to the bank...in your new car.

CHECK YOUR REFERENCES

Once you have your top four or five choices, steer over to such reference sites as **Edmund's** or **Carprice.com**. These sites offer comprehensive—and objective—vehicle reviews, safety records, and the like. You may find something that just rubs you wrong, and cross a vehicle or two off your list. While at **Edmund's**, check out the invaluable tutorial on how to buy a car; this will be your negotiation bible.

Log off and visit your local dealer for a test-drive. (Nothing will help you make up your mind better than getting behind the wheel.) Tell the dealer you're still a few weeks away from buying. Though that may be BS, you'll get less of the dealer's BS.

FIND THE FINANCING

This is an important step, but many people miss it. Before you start negotiating, you'll be better off securing financing first. Offline, check the rates offered by your bank or credit union. Online, check out **Bank Rate Monitor** to determine national interest-rate averages. While you're at it, visit **CarFinance.com** and **People-First Finance**. Depending on your situation, these online auto-finance sites may provide you with more-competitive rates and speedy credit approval.

STUDY YOUR OPTIONS

If you haven't yet decided on a vehicle, repeat Steps 1 and 2. If, on the other hand, you're itching for the keys to your dream car, start picking the options you want. See what the makers offer at their sites—or, better yet, get a jump on Step 4 and have a look at such car-buying sites as **Autobytel.com**, **AutoVantage**, **Autoweb.com**, and **CarPoint**. All of them offer a plethora of data about what's standard on your vehicle and what's extra.

DO YOUR MATH

If you're not at an online-buying site yet, go to one now. All four of those listed in Step 3 (and quite a few others) present easy-to-find information on both the manufacturer's suggested retail price (abbreviated as **MSRP**; ignore it) and dealer-invoice price (your Holy Grail). Grab the dealer invoice for your car make and model, then add up the dealer-invoice prices of all the options you want. Write these numbers down.

Before heading to Step 5, you'll have to translate the dealer invoice into the true dealer cost (see "Buyer Tip: Understand *Real Dealer Cost*," page 114) and add a few percentage points of dealer profit to make things fair (**Edmund's** and **CarPrice.com** show you how to do this). This is your target price.

Edmund's Anatomy of the Car Buying Process
What Everyone Should Know
By Tom Ichniowski and Scott Lerner-Parker

Contents
1. The Basics: The Car Buying Process
2. The Dealer's Role
3. The Dealer's Incentives
4. The Dealer's Options
5. The Dealer's Credit
6. The Dealer's Insurance
7. The Dealer's Maintenance
8. The Dealer's Repairs
9. The Dealer's Parts
10. The Dealer's Labor
11. The Dealer's Tools
12. The Dealer's Equipment
13. The Dealer's Facilities
14. The Dealer's Staff
15. The Dealer's Customers
16. The Dealer's Competition
17. The Dealer's Future
18. The Dealer's Conclusion

Introduction

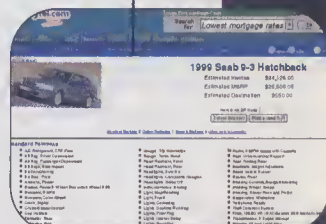
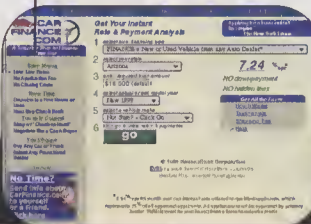
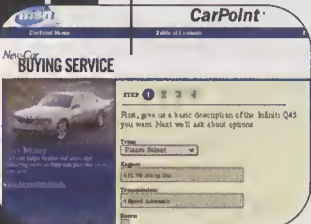
Step 1: The Basics: The Car Buying Process
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Step 6: The Dealer's Insurance
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Step 13: The Dealer's Facilities
Step 14: The Dealer's Staff
Step 15: The Dealer's Customers
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Step 18: The Dealer's Conclusion

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

STEP 5



might seem that increasing the number of dealers would mean better business for the online service, Lorimer prefers—for the time being, at least—to keep enrollment down. “I can see hitting the 3,000 mark,” he says. “Anything beyond that, and it would become more difficult to train dealers, as well as screen them for the quality our service demands.”

Service: the new watchword. To Lorimer, the challenge is to get the right dealers into the network. “There are so many services like ours out there right now,” he says. “The only way we can differentiate ourselves is through fulfillment—distributing the right dealers to the right people.” Using a combination of

population and geographic data, as well as psychographic information (i.e., the attitudes, values, and other traits of a demographic group), Lorimer and his team appear to be using an Internet-inspired model—personalization—to transform the showroom experience. “We’re even learning to factor in subtle customer preferences, such as geographic hazards,” he explains, “so we can, for instance, determine that the dealer located south and around the lake from the customer is psychologically more appealing than a dealer who’s closer but across a bridge.”

Such efforts could be a boon to dealers, too. Although online-buying services are helping shoppers slash margins, they’re also increasing traffic to member dealers. According to Forrester’s McQuivey, the number of sales leads tossed to various dealers is not insignificant. He claims that Autoweb.com sends dealers 70,000 referrals a month. Autobytel.com sends dealers in excess of 1 million referrals a year. Of those, McQuivey estimates that 10 percent buy a car from the online-network dealer that supplies a quote. Another 20 percent of all referrals buy a car within two weeks, but from a dealer outside the network. “That creates a juicy issue,”

he says. “The question starts to become: Who owns the customer relationship?”

Ask that question of dealers, automakers, and representatives of online-buying services, and all of them are likely to shout, “We do!” Some automakers, McQuivey says, believe they can forge customer relationships online that are more effective than their own dealers’ in-person efforts.

Tom Healey, a partner at J.D. Power, agrees that the Net will at least open up another marketing avenue for manufacturers. “Dealers can

hand out brochures, answer questions personally, and handle test-drives,” he says. “But carmakers can take advantage of the Web to extend the image of their product lines. BMW owners, for example, are very performance-oriented. So why not give them online video clips of their car speeding along the Autobahn? Jeep owners identifying with the sense of freedom and adventure associated with their trucks might be interested in tracking a Jeep-sponsored off-road expedition through digital dispatches from the Amazon.”

In other words, manufacturers might entertain their customers with online events in which their cars are the featured performers. “Image is very important to carmakers,” says Healey. “Even though the Web would provide only vicarious experiences for a normal customer, these still add to the sense of pride and status vehicle owners require from a purchase. Customers take that with them when they’re ready to buy again.”

Thus far, automakers haven’t significantly explored the Net’s strengths as an entertainment medium. But many manufacturers are trying to attract customers with a more personalized online experience. Says McQuivey: “Buyers will soon see a lot more online community-oriented features at manufacturer sites. And individuals will have access to custom features like MyToyota or MyVW, where the automakers can attend to them over the long haul and encourage loyalty to their brands.”

BUYER TIP: UNDERSTAND REAL DEALER COST>

You think that paying just \$500 over the dealer-invoice cost for a new car is a smashing bargain? Well, once upon a time it was. But now you have the Internet, and you can do still better.

The first step toward turning the negotiating edge in your favor is to forget entirely about the manufacturer’s suggested retail price (MSRP). Instead, pay attention to the previously confidential dealer-invoice price, which you can now find easily for any model at such sites as **Autobytel.com**, **AutoVantage**,

and **Autoweb.com**. After all, the best way to target-price your car is to discover what the dealer paid for it and then (to help keep the dealer in business) add a few percentage points of dealer profit. Such sites as **Edmund’s** and **Carprice.com** will help you determine how many points are fair based on their industry research.

What most online car buyers overlook, however, is the fact that the dealer-invoice price is often different from what the dealer actually paid for the car. The *true* dealer cost is the dealer-invoice price *minus* any holdbacks or other incentives that manufacturers pay dealers for each car they sell. These incentives can take more than \$1,000 off the dealer invoice, depending on the vehicle’s price and various manufacturers’ dealer-incentive programs. This means that the dealer you thought you were giving \$500 in profit may actually have raked in a cool \$1,500 on the deal.

If you visit any of the many sites that can help you determine the true dealer cost—including Autobytel.com’s “Weekly AutoMarket Report” and the holdback database at **Negotiation Dynamics**, both of which list current manufacturer-to-dealer payment programs by make of auto—you’ll be better prepared for negotiating. It’s even possible that you’ll pick up your next car at a cost *under* that of the dealer invoice. The dealer you work with will hate you, but he’ll live to sell another day—and certainly to someone more foolish than you.





THE ROAD AHEAD >

BROCK YATES, *Car and Driver's* featured columnist and editor-at-large, is one of the world's most respected automotive journalists. His books (among them, *The Decline and Fall of the American Automobile Industry*), screenplays (*The Cannonball Run* and *Smokey and the Bandit II*), TV commentary, and magazine pieces have made him a spokesman for the average, everyday driving fanatic. His next book, *Outlaw Machine*, about the social impact of Harley-Davidson motorcycles, will be published this year. *Y-Life* recently spoke with Yates about online car-buying resources.

Y-LIFE: How do you think the Internet will affect the business of buying and selling cars?

YATES: I think online car-buying services are in a very nascent stage. I expect a logical shakeout and a significant change in how cars are bought and sold. Exactly how or what that will be, I can't predict. But I do know that Internet resources will continue to empower the buyer. For the first time in my memory, buyers have easy access to the right information to make them knowledgeable players, as opposed to witless doofuses that have to take at face value what the dealer's selling. Up until now, it's really been a shell game that favors the dealer.

Y-LIFE: And now the Net puts a ball under every shell?

YATES: Absolutely. Buyers can go online and easily find all the right information to make better-informed decisions and negotiate more powerfully—no doubt. But the dealer still owns the car you want. And if he wants, he can evaluate your offer, determine that his profit is too small, and he can tell you to go to hell.

Y-LIFE: But since the number of buyers using online sources before buying has increased, along with their sophistication, won't that approach hurt dealers in the long run?

YATES: Maybe. But for now, if a dealer refuses to sell you a car for \$300 over his cost, another ignorant buyer will walk through the door prepared to pay five times that amount for the same car.

Y-LIFE: As buyers become more savvy, will dealers try to come up with a pricing structure that favors both buyer and seller?


YATES: We're already rapidly seeing a strange phenomenon occurring on the dealer side to come up with more-consistent pricing. But as a strategy, I don't think that'll work. And you know why? Because the average American buyer likes to haggle.

With buyers having access to open pricing structures, a profusion of auto information, and online loyalty programs, dealers will, in a nutshell, have to sell less and serve more. "If manufacturers discover how to maintain loyalty better online," McQuivey argues, "dealers would have to become comprehensive, full-service agents." And since NADA reports that service is where dealers make most of their money anyway, this transformation may not be one the dealers oppose.

Manufacturers have even bigger plans, though. Perhaps inspired by the direct-sales success of computer giants Dell and Gateway, such automakers as Ford, GM, and Mercedes, among others, have already started competing with independent online-buying services. The most notable of these efforts is **GM BuyPower**, which gives potential customers access to dealer inventories in some states, in the hope of eventually increasing sales traffic to all GM dealers throughout the country.

To some analysts, GM's move demonstrates that manufacturers are experimenting but still unsure of their role on the Net. "Who wants to comparison-shop only GM cars?" McQuivey asks. "The ultimate scenario for the consumer would be for dealers to partner with online intermediaries in an affiliate-type relationship to make their internal data and processes available to the millions of buyers who'll shop with Autobytel or CarPoint."

A unified and cooperative site could, for example, let a buyer read objective reviews comparing Toyota, Nissan, and Honda cars; access the local Toyota dealer's inventory; order a Camry right from the factory; and even check the vehicle's status on the assembly-line floor. That's an idea that pleases recent buyer Mapes: "If I had access to a service like that, I'd probably buy new cars more frequently than I do now. It empowers me as a buyer, takes the *deal* out of dealer, and improves upon an experience people have dreaded for decades."

A cooperative system of this sort is a long way off. In fact, it may never happen. "Manufacturers have too much brand hubris," says McQuivey. "They want to feel like consumers prefer to come directly to them, even though our online traffic numbers already show that they don't." 

Sean Kelly is a writer based in San Francisco.

SITES IN THIS STORY

J.D. POWER AND ASSOCIATES [www.jdpower.com]

AUTOBYTEL.COM [www.autobytel.com] • AUTOVANTAGE [www.autovantage.com]

AUTOWEB.COM [www.autoweb.com] • CARPOINT [carpoint.msn.com]

CAR AND DRIVER ONLINE [www.caranddriver.com]

EDMUND'S [www.edmunds.com] • KELLEY BLUE BOOK [www.kbb.com]

CARFINANCE.COM [www.carfinance.com]

PEOPLEFIRST FINANCE [www.peoplefirst.com]

NATIONAL AUTOMOBILE DEALERS ASSOCIATION [www.nada.org]

FORRESTER RESEARCH [www.forrester.com]

GM BUYPOWER [www.gmbuypower.com] • JEEP INTERNATIONAL [www.jeep.com]

TOYOTA [www.toyota.com] • CARPRICE.COM [www.carprice.com]

BANK RATE MONITOR [www.bankrate.com]

NEGOTIATION DYNAMICS [www.negotiationdynamics.com]

OLDWAY

BY DAVID SHEFF



NETWAY

Comparing the Tried-and-True with the Net-and-New

[GETTING DIRECTIONS]

OLD WAY

- 1 Sometimes men *do* ask for directions. My wife and I had a big night planned in San Francisco and wanted to know the quickest route to a movie theater in the Castro District, then on to a restaurant in the Mission, and from there to a party on Potrero Hill. I made calls to the restaurant and to the host of the party and scribbled out a plan.
- 2 Mentioned our itinerary to my mother-in-law, Nancy, who knows the city well. She provided her own advice about the fastest route, contradicting the earlier calls. Her suggestions also included several contingency plans, such as, "If there's an accident on Divisadero, switch over to Gough."
- 3 After copying down all the directions, I had three pages' worth. Nonetheless, before heading out on the town, I decided to compare Nancy's directions with those available on the Net.

Total time elapsed
27 minutes—and we hadn't even left home

Comments
I could have relied on my memory and intuition and on the advice of gas-station attendants along the way. But we had a schedule to meet, and there was no room for major mistakes.

WINNER

Old Way, by a bumper, since my mother-in-law anticipated traffic problems; Net Way (and other Old Way) didn't

NET WAY

- 1 Checked with Driving Directions under **YAHOO! MAPS** [maps.yahoo.com/py/ddResults.py]. Entered our starting point and the three stops.
- 2 Printed out the directions and compared them with my other notes. They were completely different.
- 3 Headed out, carrying the three sets of directions. My plan was to try a different set on each leg of the evening.
- 4 Nancy's directions to the Castro Theatre were flawless. And believe it or not, there *was* an accident on Divisadero, and so we did switch to Gough Street. We arrived with half an hour to spare (Nancy had even provided advice about where to park).
- 5 Using the restaurant owner's directions, we managed to get from the theater to the dinner spot in good time, though it took longer than the approximated time on the Yahoo! printout.
- 6 Finally, used the Yahoo! directions to get to the party and found them to be perfect—far more detailed than any others.

Total time elapsed
6 minutes checking and printing directions

Comments
The online driving directions don't take into consideration rush hour and the like but are otherwise extremely efficient. The reliability of the Old Way—simply asking someone—depends on who that someone is.



[RETURNING A DEFECTIVE PRODUCT...]

OLD WAY

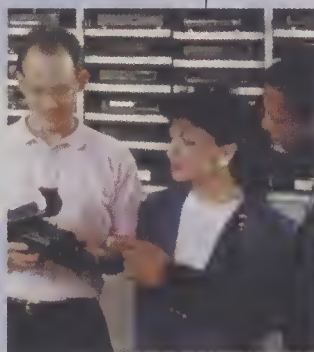
- 1 A camcorder I'd bought online [September '98, page 102] stopped working after only a few weeks. Though I planned to return it to the same vendor, I decided to call some retail stores for comparison.
- 2 Three electronics stores told me that I would have to bring or send in the camcorder for service, because I'd had it for more than a month.
- 3 Macy's would replace the camera or refund the purchase price, no questions asked. At Costco, I was told I could return the defective camcorder as long as I had the receipt.

Total time elapsed
Not applicable, as I was merely surveying stores

Comments
The exercise was a useful reminder to consider return policies before purchasing; the lowest-price purveyor may prove more costly in the long run.

NET WAY

- 1 Since I had purchased the camcorder at **NETMARKET** [www.netmarket.com], I called an 800-number on the site.
- 2 A sales representative said Netmarket would gladly refund my money. I was given a return-order number and a mailing address.
- 3 Called UPS, and the camcorder was picked up the next day. I did have to pay the small shipping charge.
- 4 The credit appeared on my next statement.



Total time elapsed
7 minutes on the phone, and 5 minutes packing up

Comments
I was impressed by my first test of the online store's customer service, which even made a follow-up call.

WINNER

I was satisfied with the Net Way, though the Old Way would've been fine, depending on where I'd bought the camcorder

[...AND BUYING A REPLACEMENT]

OLD WAY

- 1 I could easily have returned to Netmarket and purchased the same camcorder. It was a good buy, and I'd been impressed by the company's customer service. However, I couldn't help trying again.
- 2 Surveyed the local stores for prices. Macy's may have a liberal return policy, but it was asking over \$100 more than Netmarket. Costco didn't have mine or a similar model in stock.
- 3 Other stores had the camera—for about \$100 more than I'd paid.

Total time elapsed
18 minutes calling

Comments
When you know what you want, it's easier to let your fingers do the walking.

NET WAY

- 1 My father had told me to check into **ESMARTS** [www.esmarts.com]. It's not a store but a guide to shopping alternatives—including discount stores, auctions, and shopping agents. Netmarket was a recommended "cheap store," but I found a listing for a new alternative.
- 2 Tried **888CAMCORDER** [www.888camcorder.com] and was impressed by its exhaustive selection of products.
- 3 Found the identical Sony model, the CCDTR940, for \$555. This was \$40 less than even Netmarket's price.
- 4 There was no online ordering system, so I followed the instructions and switched to the Old Way of calling the company's toll-free number: 888-camcorder.
- 5 Placed the order, and was even promised a free gift (a battery, tripod, or the like). Both will arrive via UPS.

Total time elapsed
6 minutes surfing and phoning

Comments
Impressive savings, though the shipping cost is high: \$29.95. Still, the overall price is cheaper than the alternatives.



WINNER

Net Way

Site- reviews

Each month we send experts in various fields to seek out the best the Web has to offer. But first, a quick look at what's hot this month

new notable & fun!

RE.LAUNCH

DR. KOOP'S COMMUNITY. Discuss your medical and/or psychological maladies with fellow sufferers in one of this trusted site's 40-plus new chat support groups. Quite literally, these chatters feel your pain.
www.drkoop.com

DEALERNET. This revamped, resold veteran returns, featuring both new- and used-car listings from member dealerships.
www.dealernet.com

WOMENCONNECT.COM. Formerly Women's Connection Online, this hub for personalized women's business, health, and family news draws content from *Working Woman* and *Working Mother* magazines.
www.womenconnect.com

COUNTRY.COM. The home of the Nashville Network and Country Music Television has lassoed in the Country Music Hall of Fame—along with its Texas-size music database.
www.country.com

ARTHUR FROMMER'S BUDGET TRAVEL ONLINE. The travel guide charts a new route with Lowestfare.com, a site for booking airline tickets.
www.frommers.com

INDIVIDUAL INVESTOR ONLINE. Besides a new personal-portfolio manager, this online version of the print publication adds an extensive daily news page and a beefier search engine.
www.iionline.com

LYCOS SHOPPING. The Lycos Shopping Network expands, adding links to thou-

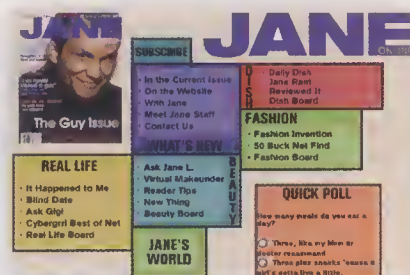
sands of brand-name products, including Seiko watches and Mrs. Fields cookies.
www.lycos.com/shopnet

NET.B@NK. The Net's self-proclaimed largest bank now offers customers faster access to their accounts, thanks to a nifty structural redesign.
www.netbank.com

NEWS & ZINES

SEAN HANNITY. Conservative talk-radio and Fox News Network wonk Sean Hannity provides a text-heavy page of links to newspapers, his preferred columnists, and, of course, "liberal lies."
www.hannity.com

JANE. The online version of Jane Pratt's eponymous magazine includes the Daily Dish gossip report and Cybergrrl Best of Net.
www.janemag.com/mainhome.htm



Find a blind date, take a poll, or read Editor Pratt's chatty column at Jane's Web hangout.

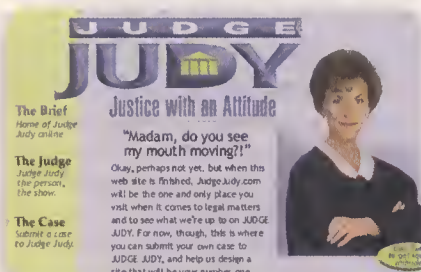
EPE ONLINE. Everyday Practical Electronics, a zine for electronics and computer hobbyists, offers plans and projects for those who just can't stop soldering. *Subscription service.*
www.epemag.com

LEISURE-SUIT. The creators of this testosterone-soaked guys' zine aim to fill a huge gap in the men's media: sex and movies from a male point of view. Haven't they heard of *Maxim*?
www.leisure-suit.com

CAREER MAGAZINE. Does your career need "jump-starting" (career-guide-speak for being in a rut)? If so, consider this rich mix

of advice-filled articles, including "Winning Jobs and Influencing People" and "Network Your Way to a Job."
www.careermag.com

IT'S ENTERTAINMENT



You didn't think she was going to let Judge Ed Koch have the Web all to himself, did you?

JUDGE JUDY. TV's feistiest justice frequently beats her judicious peers in the ratings. Now she's inviting surfers to submit cases for her careful scrutiny.
www.judgejudy.com

CYBERSLACKER. Not for the faint of heart (or your children), this full-screen cartoon follows the grungy title character as she struggles with the challenges of life, love, and the pursuit of her own New York apartment.
www.cyberslacker.com

HOME & FAMILY

NBC SCHOOLS. The peacock now covers what's happening in local schools via its Interactive Neighborhood site network. Find out if your next PTA meeting conflicts with Must-See TV.
www.nbcin.com

ZOOG DISNEY. "Anything you send us or do could end up on TV," warns this site, which relays selected weekly results from its viewer polls and e-mails to the Disney cable-TV channel for airing. Do they really mean *anything*?
www.zoogdisney.com

JUNIORNET. This network delivers kid-focused content from such well-known titles as *Highlights for Children*, *Ranger*

Rick, *Weekly Reader*, and *Sports Illustrated for Kids*—without the advertisements. Subscription service.
www.juniornet.com

FUNDANGO. This is an amazingly low-key collection of fiction, puzzles, and interactive contests for kids—and a welcome alternative to Barney, Arthur, or that Furby. Fire the nanny!
www.fundango.com

KIDS BANK.COM. Do your children spend the bulk of their allowances on video games and pure cane sugar products? Let family friends-to-be Dollar Bill and Mr. Electronic Funds Transfer teach them how to pinch their pennies.
www.kidsbank.com

MISC. NEAT

JESUS2000. Despite its cheesy nomenclature, this site is actually a Class-A means for Christians to reach out and see Jerusalem and other holy sights, while also shopping for religious objects.
www.jesus2000.com

DAYTONA BEACH. This new site has only one thing to say: When's *your* spring break, dude?
www.daytonabeach.com

GOT MILK? Those witty celebrity magazine ads notwithstanding, cow-juice sales remain static. Moo-ve your mouse and click here for clever Got Milk? paraphernalia.
www.gotmilk.com

JUMP! This free online calendar/address book integrates dates to remember (from Hollywood Online and the Weather Channel, among others) with your own personal schedule.
www.jump.com

USELESS KNOWLEDGE.COM. On March 1, 1968, NBC announced the return to TV of its previously canceled *Star Trek* series. Where did we discover this gold nugget of trivia? Here, of course.
www.uselessknowledge.com

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Irish Traditions

for St. Patrick's Day

THE BEST ★★★★★

On March 17, everyone's an honorary Irishman (or Irishwoman, as the case may be). *The Irish Times*, Ireland's paper and Web site of record, puts you in the thick of all the action on its **ST. PATRICK'S FESTIVAL** site. Learn about St. Patrick and the history of his holiday before the big day, then view a live Webcast of the Dublin parade. Explore online reports from all over Ireland and the globe, as the saint's feast day is celebrated from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe and everywhere in between. The design is slick, the information is first-rate, and the cartoons are priceless. www.irish-times.com/St.Patricks ★★★★★

Plan your own visit to the Emerald Isle with the **IRISH TOURIST BOARD**'s extensive yet streamlined site. Though you still have to book your flight the old-fashioned way, there's good info on getting there from 17 countries, a searchable database of places to stay and things to do, and a tool kit for building a personal brochure. Deskbound daydreamers can discover Ireland online—from the breathtakingly beautiful vistas of the Connemara coast to the thoroughly modern cities of Dublin and Cork—with streaming video and panoramic stills. www.ireland.travel.ie/home ★★★★★

THE REST ★★★★★

If you're spending the day in front of the computer instead of in the local with a pint in your hand, then the **VIRTUAL IRISH PUB** is the place to be. Chat with friendly VIP regulars, rate your local watering hole in a Pubguide that spans the world, browse a huge recipe file of killer cocktails, or take a virtual tour of Ireland. Guests enter for

free, but signing up as a pub Regular (\$45 U.S./year) gives you your own home page and private chat room. And though there's no guarantee you'll find true love, four weddings and a baby got their start on this site.

www.vip.ie ★★★★★



Does your idea of Irish music begin and end with "Danny Boy"? Start expanding your repertoire at **THE THISTLE & SHAMROCK**, home of the nationally syndicated Celtic-music program hosted by Fiona Ritchie. Elegantly designed, this magnet for enthusiasts includes broadcast schedules, monthly spotlights on various artists, and playlists for hunting down tapes and CDs. Want your Black 47 fix live? Check **DIRTY LINEN** magazine's state-by-state gig listings for a large roster of Celtic and other folk and roots musicians, then hit **IRISH MUSIC** magazine for live dates back in the motherland.

www.npr.org/programs/thistle/thistle.html

★★★★★

www.dirtylinen.com ★★★★★

mag.irish-music.net ★★★★★

With its comprehensive guide to restaurants in Ireland (yes, you can eat Japanese in Dublin), **A TASTE OF IRELAND** proves

there's more to Irish cooking than just boiled beef and cabbage. Gourmet chefs of all persuasions will appreciate this site's recipes for tempting fare from the traditional (brown bread) to the avant-garde (pan-fried ostrich with wild mushrooms). www.tasteofireland.com ★★★★★

Want to know more about leprechauns? Sample the many tales of the Good Folk and their cousins the faeries, selkies, hobs, and elves in **LITTLE PEOPLE**, a charmingly illustrated and annotated guide to the wee ones of Celtic folklore and legend.

www.grayweb.com/wee_indx.html

★★★★★

Millions of Irish were forced to immigrate to North America, Australia, and New Zealand in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. If your ancestors were among them, you can start tracing your roots at **IRISH FAMILY HISTORY FOUNDATION**, which has access to tens of millions of birth, death, and property records from both the Republic and Northern Ireland.

An initial search can cost as little as £50 (approximately \$70 U.S.), with a comprehensive family report starting at £150 (\$210 U.S.). For American Irish-Catholics, the **ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS** is also a good starting point for researching family heritage, with a list of genealogy sites and centers in both the U.S. and Ireland.

www.irish-roots.net ★★★★★

www.aoh.com ★★★★★

A younger Irish institution, the **IRISH LESBIAN AND GAY ORGANIZATION** was founded in 1990 in New York City, where it holds such monthly events as Irish folk dancing (think *Riverdance*, without Michael Flatley). Every March 17, ILGO also holds a St. Patrick's Day Demonstration, which protests the group's exclusion from marching in the New York parade.

www.geocities.com/Broadway/5421/ilgo.html

★★★★★

—R.T.

Gardening

THE BEST ★★★★★

Where do you want to grow today? Leafing through the hundreds of sites created for green thumbs, we found **GARDENGUIDES** to be the clear winner for gardening info. A well-organized menu offers counsel on the planting, harvesting, disease-proofing, and storing of many vegetables, flowers, and herbs. The site also provides gardening-book suggestions (with links to online booksellers) and excellent pointers to other sites. Recipes, a discussion group, and information on such esoteric topics as rock gardens and herbs to avoid during pregnancy make this site thorough, attractive, and easy to use.

www.gardenguides.com ★★★★★

THE REST ★★★★★

The **SIERRAHOME GARDENING** pages are cross-referenced with the site's other sections on cooking, home design, travel, and family genealogy, which make them a font of information for all things Martha Stewart-esque (surprisingly, Stewart's own site offers little gardening information). Sierra has a 3,000-entry plant encyclopedia with photos as well as planting tips, along with a page of links that will take you to some extremely odd and obscure gardening sites. Are your asparagus spears on the small side? Visit Sierra's impressive problem-solving database, which allows you to identify—often via photographic examples—your specific plant problems and then read about possible solutions.

www.sierra.com/sierrahome/gardening

★★★★★

BOTANY.COM offers the best plant encyclopedia on the Web: If you can find it in your garden, you can find it here.



MARK DOULETTON/STONE

Each entry includes a thorough description of the plant, as well as detailed information on its cultivation and propagation. You won't find recipes, problem-solving hints, or poetic meditations on life in the soil here, just good, solid data—though you may find the text, which is a bit prosaic and has few paragraph breaks, difficult to read.

www.botany.com ★★★★★

Ketzel Levine, the so-called Doyenne of Dirt, has a regular gig discussing horticulture on National Public Radio, and her **TALKINGPLANTS.COM** site is well written, witty, and irreverent. There are amusing parodies of interviews with famous folks and a breezy plant-profile section that offers tips and one-liners ("Meet Mr. Camellia. He was a humble Jesuit pharmacist who never knew a self-indulgent moment") about a hundred or so plants. Though not the most comprehensive site, talkingplants.com is definitely the funniest, and it's worth coming back to every few weeks to read Levine's diary entries (which may or

may not have anything at all to do with gardening).

www.talkingplants.com ★★★★★

Sponsored by Toro, a maker of lawn mowers and other gardening equipment, **ASK EARL, THE YARD-CARE ANSWER GUY** focuses all its attention on maintaining a lush lawn. The site contains few external links, sparse information on keeping a vegetable garden or planting flowers, and scant graphics. But if you have a question about grass, whether it be watering, pest control, or soil, this is the place to go. The Ask Earl search engine helps you find solutions to lawn-care problems.

www.yardcare.com ★★★★★

GARDENWEB bills itself as "the Internet's Garden Community," and it's an apt description. The site's most worthwhile feature is a sizable and active forum in which visitors discuss a wide range of topics and get feedback and advice. Trying to find an answer to your *Vietchia* palm-tree troubles? This is the place to post. Also of interest are an interactive contest, a link to well-written articles from Brooklyn Botanic Gardens publications, and an expansive (if not too in-depth) glossary.

www.gardenweb.com ★★★★★

WEEKEND GARDENER is a bit of a smorgasbord. There's a good amount of info on seeds, including a helpful interactive GrowGuide: Type in your local frost dates, and it responds with what should be sown, transplanted, or hardened off (gradually acclimatized) in a given week. There's also a page on weather lore, and a collection of tips on such tangential problems as how to avoid crying while slicing onions.

www.chestnut-sw.com/weekend.htm

★★★★★

—D.G.

A LINK TOO FAR...

If your tastes run to gardening at night, you'll like **GOthic GARDENING**, which offers a little greenhouse of horrors. Using the Witch's Flora Chart, you can learn how to grow to a garden by the phases of the moon and make good use of bats and other Gothic Organic Pest Controls.

www.gothic.net/~malice

Buying Used Books Online

THE BEST ★★★★★

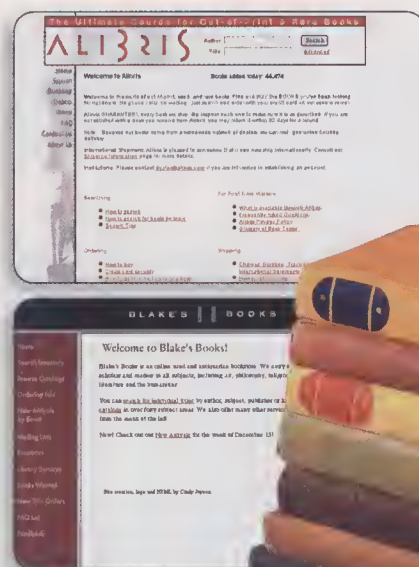
POWELL'S BOOKS, the online version of the famous Portland, Oregon, mecca for bibliophiles, sells a wide variety of both new and used books. Its offerings range from obscure monographs to the latest best-sellers at extremely reasonable prices, and the site should be the first stop for anybody looking to buy used books online. The browsing process is a bit labored, though: Search for books by John Updike, and you'll have to click on each title to find out what kinds of editions and prices are available. However, the overwhelmingly comprehensive selection and the refreshingly hassle-free checkout process more than make up for any shortcomings.

www.powells.com ★★★★★

Although it's a search engine and not a shopping site, **BOOKFINDER.COM** is an extremely useful service that can help you both find a book and take steps toward purchasing it. The site lets you search for author names, titles, or other keywords and then query numerous vendors of both new and used books. The actual ordering process varies. If Amazon.com has what you're seeking, for example, it's a snap to order online. At some other sites, you have to submit your request by e-mail. The bookstore then contacts you, after which you mail-order the book over the phone. Despite this occasional trouble, Book-Finder's scope renders it an invaluable resource for the shopper.

www.bookfinder.com ★★★★★

Though it isn't the place to find that bruised, \$1 copy of *War and Peace*, **ALIBRIS** is the place to find a \$100 first edition of John Steinbeck's *East of Eden*. Compiled from a worldwide network of



dealers, its rare and out-of-print selection is impressive (more than 31,000 titles added on a typical day). So is the supercharged search engine, which lets you specify signed copies, first editions, and price range. The condition of each book is described in detail, so you won't shell out money only to receive a wet rag of faded script—and you can order online through a secure server. Just be prepared to wait: The dealer-to-Alibris-to-you shipping route can take several weeks.

www.alibris.com ★★★★★

THE REST ★★★★★

Incorporating the catalogs of more than 4,000 separate booksellers, the **ADVANCED BOOK EXCHANGE (ABE)** allows you not only to search the entire database for a specific title but also to browse each bookstore's collection online. Like Alibris, it details each book's condition. Unfortunately, the actual shopping

process is another variation on the labor-intensive method of "send an e-mail and wait for them to get back to you." Nevertheless, ABE remains an excellent source for used and out-of-print books. www.abebooks.com ★★★★★

BLAKE'S BOOKS stocks all subjects but specializes in scholarly tomes, which means you'll find a lot of university-press titles, art history, social science, and general history here. This well-designed, easy-to-use site lets you browse by subject matter as well as search for a specific author or book. Blake's also offers an e-mail service (to

inform you of new arrivals) and easy

online ordering—but not through a secure server, which may be of concern to some shoppers. www.blakesbooks.com ★★★★★

REREADABLES is the place to find that \$1 copy of *War and Peace*. The selection isn't exactly vast, and there's no indication

as to what shape the books are in, but this is where to go for bargain-basement shopping. As with any store that stocks cheap paperbacks, you can expect to find lots of mystery, science fiction, and romance. As its selection widens (one hopes), this could become a godsend for financially strapped book lovers everywhere.

www.rereadables.com ★★★★★

Advertising "five million books at blow-out prices," **BOOKCLOSEOUTS.COM** is a clearinghouse for the kinds of titles that litter basements across America. Search for the latest best-sellers, and chances are you'll come up empty; browse the coffee-table-book section, and you'll find hundreds of glossy tomes. The quick-search function is iffy at best: An author search for Joyce Carol Oates yielded no matches, though five of her titles were actually in stock. Still, this site generally delivers new books at used-book bargain rates.

www.bookcloseouts.com ★★★★★ —B.E.



Alternative Medicine

THE BEST ★★★★★

With more and more Americans turning to alternative medicines (one recent study claims two in five of us use nontraditional healing practices), online resources are plentiful. So are dubious claims. For a healthy dose of reliable information, visit **ASK DR. WEIL**, where best-selling holistic guru Dr. Andrew Weil dispenses sage advice ("Healthier Heart with Herbs?") and answers sticky questions ("Stuck with Stinky Feet?") in a daily Q&A. Other useful features include an interactive Vitamin Adviser and well-moderated bulletin boards. But what makes this site indispensable is its database of around 10,000 certified local practitioners, which you can search by discipline, state, and ZIP code to find healers in your own backyard. Who knew Iowa was a hotbed of guided-imagery therapists? www.drweil.com ★★★★★

THE REST ★★★★★

How deeply alternative medicine has penetrated Middle America is evidenced by the archive of press clips from mainstream media at **ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE**

ONLINE, which offers enormous resources. Browse the Therapies library to find in-depth background info on 21 holistic disciplines, or use the Personal Wellness Profiler to see a list of suggested remedies for what ails you. Though AMO's advocacy may be too gung-ho for some, even unbelievers may be surprised to learn that half of all medical schools now offer courses in alternative medicine.



DONNA DAYTON/STONE

hyperion.advanced.org/24206 ★★★★★

HEALTH MATTERS, part of the Life Matters site, brings together a number of alternative-medicine authorities. There are worthy primers here on homeopathy, biofeedback, and the self-administered pressure-point therapy of Jin Shin Jyutsu, along with sections devoted to Relating Mat-

ters and Nutrition Matters. lifematters.com/healthn.html ★★★★★

WELLNESSWEB's Alternative/Complementary Medicine section covers broad-based approaches to health maintenance. Clicking on the name of an illness takes you to a discussion of the latest research developments in alternative remedies for that malady (such as taking ginkgo biloba to treat sexual problems triggered by antidepressants).

www.wellnessweb.com ★★★★★

PLANETHERBS ONLINE houses good reading ("Herbal Medicine in Shakespeare's England") and herbal recipes that make for good healing.

www.planetherbs.com/articles ★★★★★

YourSpine's "**ASK THE CHIROPRACTOR**" offers a good crash course in chiropractic basics, while **CHIROPRACTIC ONLINE TODAY** has a decent practitioner finder. www.yourspine.com/ask/ask.htm ★★★★★ www.interadcom.com/dc.html ★★★★★

QI: THE JOURNAL OF TRADITIONAL EASTERN HEALTH & FITNESS includes a nifty animated skeleton to guide you through tai chi chuan movements. **CALM SPIRIT MAGAZINE ONLINE** is another good source for traditional Chinese and Tibetan medicine.

www.qi-journal.com ★★★★★ ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/CalmSpirit/calmpage.htm ★★★★★

THE GUIDE TO AROMATHERAPY and **BIRD'S ENCYCLOPEDIA OF AROMATHERAPY** are the best general reference sites on this olfactory branch of alternative medicine. For a whiff of romance, try Tara Fellner's **AROMATHERAPY FOR LOVERS**.

www.fragrant.demon.co.uk ★★★★★ www.imm.org.pl/bird/oilframe.htm ★★★★★ www.goodhousekeeping.com/depts/relat/aromatf1.htm ★★★★★

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF AYURVEDIC MEDICINE provides good resources on Ayurveda ("the science of life"), a traditional Hindu system that has been integrated into many nontraditional disciplines. www.niam.com ★★★★★

LIGHT TOUCH KINESIOLOGY offers a page-by-page tutorial of a system that combines muscle monitoring with the principles of Chinese medicine.

www.lexicon.net/lightman ★★★★★

The **HOLISTIC HEALING WEB PAGE**, a no-frills mega-index packed with scores of links, articles, and directories, is a good jump-off point for researching wellness—provided you're willing to spend the time to separate the wheat from the chaff.

www.holisticmed.com ★★★★★

—R.T.

Site Spoofs

THE BEST ★★★★★

The Web is inundated with spoofs of the Drudge Report, but the **DRUDGE RETORT** best catches Matt Drudge's insistent, "gotcha" style of yellow journalism. It also mimics the site's self-consciously serious layout, while delivering hilarious headlines ("Federal Porn Fallout: Hospitals Brace for 'Starr Babies!'") screamed one in mid-November), plenty of articles, and links to other bizarre sites. Poking scathing fun at real-life pundits from both sides of the political divide, the Drudge Retort can at times be so dead-on (not to mention deadpan) that you'll wonder if the news item you're reading is actually true.

www.drudge.com ★★★★★

You can go anywhere on the Web, but you can't escape *Star Wars*. The hilarious **STAR WARS OFFICIAL SITE GAG** parodies not the movie but the official Web site for the *Star Wars* films, complete with insufferable download times, facts about the new prequel (*Episode 1: Here Come the Jedis!*), and information on the re-rerelease of the trilogy (the "Very Special Edition"). Find out about the films' new "R" rating (hint: Luke loses more than his hand, and the Jawas sell more than just droids) and the new Tatooine Dining Sequence, "a meandering twenty-minute ramble of pointless footage." Taking a humorous jab at the self-importance surrounding the whole franchise, this hilarious spoof is, frankly, long overdue.

www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Alley/7028/swosg.htm ★★★★★

THE REST ★★★★★

Well, why spoof one Web site when you can spoof them all? The **PAGE O' SPOOFS**

links to numerous sites, including Bed-Crabber (a riotously disgusting parody of WebCrawler), Drop Piggy (Prodigy), and USA Toady (a spoof of *USA Today* that features only toads and frogs). Though most

of the pages are sidesplitting, they don't link elsewhere, which is a shame because the links they seem to provide—often in the form of such headlines as "Frogakhan Says He May Sue Toadal Government on Behalf of Fly Addicts"—are quite promising.

www.bcpl.lib.md.us/~dbroida/spoof.html

★★★★★

Touting "Good Products, by Good People, for Good People," **NUSTRONICS** takes a jab at all those bland corporate sites you stumble across while browsing the Web. A pioneer in the cattle-in-the-home industry, the company markets a line of "products" ranging from a meat juicer to the COW-130, "a military transport plane able to deliver a cow, anywhere in the world, in 24 hours or less." Nusstronics also has an audio-surveillance division, with some bizarre "intercepted audio messages." It's a funny premise, but the result is more often amused befuddlement than glee.

www.nusstronics.com ★★★★★

Said to be maintained by six members of the Minnetonka Senior Center, all of whom are retired postal workers, **HASTA-LAVISTA** is a fake search engine that promises not to use any spiffy technology to meet your query needs—just plain, old-fashioned hard work. Its information source? "The large stack of cookbooks and old periodicals located toward the rear of our office." Enter something in the "Search" field, and then start waiting. Though brought to you by the same folks who designed *Star Wars* Official Site Gag (see above), HastaLaVista lacks the sharp

wit and thoroughness of their other creation.

www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Alley/7028/hasta.htm

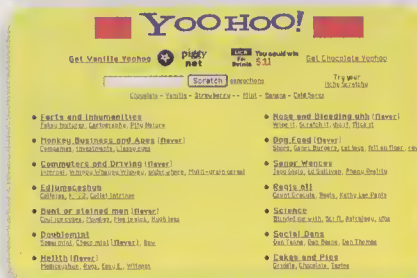
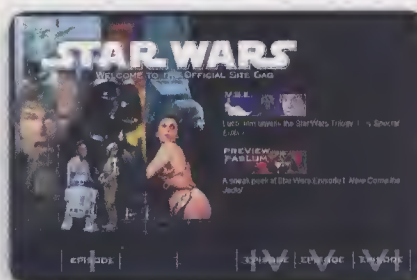
★★★★★

Are all those Web zines starting to annoy you with their one-word names and their too-hip-for-you attitude? Well, you may want to check out **STALE**, a vicious replica of the infamous Michael Kinsley-edited, Microsoft-funded Slate. "You will read it because it demands to be read," Stale's editor smugly declares. Inside the issue (dating from as far back as August 1996), you can find 22 pages

of fake political stories, TV reviews, and other random material that ranges from the uproarious (a review of other magazines, including *Time*, *Teen Beat*, and *Penthouse*) to the painful (more "Bob Dole is old" jokes). It could all be a lot funnier, were it not so dated. But then again, it *is* called Stale.

www.stale.com ★★★★★

—B.E.



Site parodies abound on the Web. Above: *Star Wars* Official Site Gag, Page o' Spoofs, Stale.

Resources for New Parents

THE BEST ★★★★★

It's 2 a.m., and your new baby has a fever. What do you do? Try **DR. GREENE'S HOUSE CALLS** for advice from a real pediatrician. This site is filled with in-depth answers to specific children's health questions. A good search engine will help you find answers quickly, or you can just browse to get general information on such topics as immunizations, infectious diseases, allergies, and even potty training. A search on *fever* yielded extremely detailed info on what a fever is, how high is dangerous, how to treat a fever, and when to call your doctor.

www.drgreene.com ★★★★★

PARENT SOUP is particularly useful to those hoping to network with other parents through live chat, forums, and message boards covering literally hundreds of topics from infertility, pregnancy loss, and postpartum depression to multiple births. There is also an Expert section that features live chats with such pros as child-behavior specialist Dr. Bill Sears, pediatricians, and the La Leche League. Plenty of searchable archived material will help answer any questions you might have, and you can tune the site to give you information strictly for new parents.

www.parentsoup.com ★★★★★

THE REST ★★★★★

If you're looking for an antidote to the media's idealized version of motherhood, check out **HIP MAMA**. The Web version of this popular print magazine gives an unvarnished look at the nitty-gritty of parenting, with straight talk about the joys and craziness. Hip Talk offers group discussion forums, and Hot Flash reports breaking

news relating to mothers and kids. Or check out Maternal Matters for up-to-the-minute advice about parenting. The Sex and Parenting section is conveniently divided into two sections: Children's Sexuality gives tips on how to talk to kids about sex, while Parent's Sexuality helps you cope with your own.

www.hipmama.com ★★★★★

FATHERING MAGAZINE is a great place to get Dad's side of the story. This e-zine tackles such topics as the Joy of Fathering, Fathers and Daughters, Fathers and Sons, Custody and Divorce, Single Fathers, and Blended Families. The Male Body section has loads of articles on men's and children's health issues. If you want to be either amused or touched, check out True Stories, Fathering Fiction, and Fathering Poetry. Boards and links round out the site.

www.fathermag.com ★★★★★

BREASTFEEDING.COM is a wonderful site that supports the decision to breast-feed with a persuasive list of all the reasons

why mothers should breast-feed their babies. For first-time parents, this is a great place to find step-by-step feeding instructions, with pictures. There are even video clips of all the steps involved, from positioning the baby to helping her get the proper suckling "latch" on the breast. The site also provides information on breast-feeding advocacy, for



those who want to get more involved in the cause or find a nearby lactation consultant. Lest you take this all too seriously, a great humor section will lighten up your day.

www.breastfeeding.com ★★★★★

SPECIALIZED SITES

Tommy's CyberNursery Preemie Web

For premature arrivals

www.flash.net/~cyberkid/tckframe.htm

Welcome to Parents of Twins/Multiples

For those blessed doubly, triply, or more

www.owc.net/~mfoley

Adopting.com

For parents who want to adopt

www.adopting.com

Making Lemonade

For single parents

www.makinglemonade.com

iBaby.com

For buying baby paraphernalia

www.ibaby.com

If you can't figure out why your baby is still in diapers at two years old, take a look at **ZERO TO THREE**. Sponsored by a non-profit organization called the National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families, this site is dedicated to teaching parents about the healthy development of babies and young children. Developmental Milestones outlines what kinds of behavior to expect from birth to eight months and up, while New Visions: A Parent's Guide to Understanding Developmental Assessment helps prepare parents of a child with developmental differences for the process of behavioral evaluation. There's also a primer on how to pick a good child-care provider, complete with resources to help you locate one.

www.zerotothree.org ★★★★★

—L.K.

Consumer Protection

THE BEST ★★★★★

Edgar Dworsky's **CONSUMER WORLD** will save you time and money. This massive collection of well-organized, current links is the first place to go for practically any consumer-related issue, from researching product reviews to comparison shopping for discount airfares or even filing consumer complaints. Contact customer service for a host of products and businesses, and access state enforcement agencies (the site includes a great compilation of links to state lemon-law summaries). There are also financial and credit card tips, such as Consumer World's own "12 Credit Card Secrets Banks Don't Want You to Know." Though Dworsky disclaims responsibility for information from elsewhere on the Web, he has earmarked those sites he considers most useful.

www.consumerworld.org

★★★★★

CONSUMER REPORTS ONLINE, the Web version of Consumers Union's well-known nonprofit monthly, gives you everything the magazine does—and more. For a modest \$2.95 a month, subscribers to the site can search the full database of CR's archived reports, which cover nearly everything the average family ever buys.

www.consumerreports.org ★★★★★

U.S. CONSUMER GATEWAY is a portal to the federal government's consumer-related divisions—from the Environmental Protection Agency to the Federal Trade Commission—and it features a huge archive of reports about subjects as diverse

as product safety and credit protection. From here, you can follow links to other relevant government sites. Particularly helpful is the **CONSUMER INFORMATION CENTER**, which serves up free online versions of hundreds of consumer publications (via a zippy search utility) and the latest news about such things as product recalls. It also offers a good guide to federal sales and auctions, complete with tips (e.g., "Don't expect to buy a \$1 yacht").

www.consumer.gov ★★★★★

www.pueblo.gsa.gov ★★★★★



SUSAN WEINSTEIN/STONE

STOCK DETECTIVE is dedicated to rooting out scams, touts, frauds, and bad buys. Well designed and well written, it's one of the free investor-oriented online publications of Axxess Inc.'s FinancialWeb.

www.stockdetective.com ★★★★★

THE REST ★★★★★

The **NATIONAL CONSUMER LAW CENTER**'s free information can help you troubleshoot credit problems, handle difficulties with your local utility company, and decide whether it's smarter to lease or rent that new car.

www.consumerlaw.org ★★★★★

A LINK TOO FAR...

Want to save money by buying some of those big-ticket items on the Web? Let's see....Car? Check. Personal computer? Check. Coffin? Check. Yes, you can plan to enter the afterlife—if there is one—in style at **DIRECT CASKET**, which claims to offer the most complete line of products direct to, er, consumers, at savings of 50 percent to 75 percent. Consider it an investment in the future.

www.directcasket.com

The **NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CONSUMER EDUCATION** is a resource intended largely for teachers, but there's plenty here for other folks, too. Quick lessons on such topics as "Bankruptcy—Fresh Start or Big Mistake?" are concise and illuminating, as are more-detailed tutorials in financial planning and investing.

www.emich.edu/public/coe/nice/nice.html

★★★★★

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING's site on HomeArts offers occasional consumer stories and archives reviews of appliances and household goods that receive the Good Housekeeping Institute's famous seal of approval.

homearts.com/gh/toc/00ghhpc1.htm ★★★★★

BIZRATE.COM's ratings of Web shopping sites are supplied by real-life shoppers—and the site doesn't accept advertising. Though you don't get more than a ranking and a generic site description here, it's one way to weed out the stinkers.

www.bizrate.com ★★★★★

Got a complaint? Log on to **THE BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU**'s central Web server for the U.S. and Canada. You can hop to your local BBB and find out, for example, exactly what the rules are for returning defective merchandise for different companies, or how many recent complaints have been lodged against local establishments.

www.bbb.org ★★★★★

THE CONSUMER LAW PAGE, hosted by an aggressive consumer-advocacy law firm, has suggestions for redressing corporate malfeasance. If you're a victim of a big, bad business, this is the site to check.

consumerlawpage.com ★★★★★

—R.T.

Game Shows

THE BEST ★★★★★

Are you somebody who sits on the couch and—to the dismay of family and friends—screams out the answers to clueless game-show contestants who will never be able to heed your advice? If so, playing online lets you be part of the action without having to endure the audition process. At Sony's Station, you can play two of the most popular game shows of all time, **JEOPARDY!** and **WHEEL OF FORTUNE**. These virtual simulacra, which let you play by yourself or against others, feature all the sights and sounds of the television shows. There

is no money involved, but there are prizes, and the site makes you feel as if you are actually there with Alex or Pat and Vanna. www.station.sony.com/jeopardy ★★★★★
www.station.sony.com/wheel ★★★★★

The best and most comprehensive of the fan sites is **JUSTIN'S GAME SHOW SHRINE**, where you can check out photos of David Letterman and other celebs appearing as game-show contestants before they got their lucky breaks. This site is chock-full of historic factoids, including the story of an unemployed ice-cream-truck driver who figured out the pattern of the *Press Your Luck* board and duped the show out

of \$110,000. Test your IQ with the trivia quiz, trade tapes with Justin, and use his excellent links section to jump into the far reaches of the game-show universe. www.negia.net/~justind/shrine.html ★★★★★

THE REST ★★★★★

One of the few modern game shows that have managed to captivate fans is *Win Ben Stein's Money*, and at **WIN BEN STEIN'S CYBER MONEY**, you'll get a chance to match wits against this actor, lawyer, professor, and all-around know-it-all. An animated Stein is with you every step of the way as you answer challenging questions in a quest to win a Comedy Central T-shirt. Real Steinophiles will also want to visit his official home page, **BEN'S HOUSE**. www.comcentral.com/bstein ★★★★★
www.benstein.com/stein2.html ★★★★★

The '70s are back, and that quintessential '70s Super Bowl of silliness—*The Gong*



Sony ES home theater receiver, and below it, a Sony 5-disc changer that plays DVDs and CDs so you easily switch between movies and music

"Stands head and shoulders above the other sites we checked out."
ShoppingLab.com

For point-and-click products of a different sort

Home theater components. DVD players. CD players. Speakers. Mini-systems. Camcorders.

Now there's a site where you can see them all, compare and buy without risk or hassle. It's www.crutchfield.com/av.

We're the authorized website for practically every major audio and video brand out there, so we can bring you the latest models, deliver fast, and cover you with the full warranty and our own Total Satisfaction Guarantee.

And there's more. You'll find an entire library on how to choose components. You'll get the straight scoop on the features and specs of every model. You'll discover great savings. And just wait until you see our shipping deal. Check it out today. Getting a new stereo has never been this easy.

Want a FREE hard copy of our 140 page catalog? Call: 1-888-802-7701.
 (It's toll-free. Ask for "extension YIL.")



www.crutchfield.com/av

Home Audio • Car Stereo • Video • Home Theater

Show—still has a legion of loyal fans. **THE GONG SHOW FAN PAGE** has got it all: photos; sound files (including the infamous gong); chats; and a downloadable *Gong Show* greeting card that you can send to unsuspecting friends. Isn't it time you revisited the comedic stylings of Jamie Farr, Arte Johnson, and the Unknown Comic? members.tripod.com/~wrcw ★★★★★

"Come on Down!!" One of the longest-running catchphrases in game-show history is now calling you to test your pricing prowess online. **NET PRICE IS RIGHT** offers the same exciting action as the TV show, and the high-quality photos and detailed descriptions of items make it easy to place an informed bid via e-mail. Need a real studio audience for that big adrenaline rush? Hit the official **PRICE IS RIGHT** site for info on ordering tickets.

www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/3085

★★★★★

marketing.cbs.com/daytime/price ★★★★★

From current ratings information to detailed histories of such classics as *Password* and *Name That Tune*, **THE GAME SHOW CONVENTION CENTER** offers one-stop surfing, including vintage photos from both shows. Site creator Steve Beverly, host of the PBS game show *I've Heard That Song!*, shares his extensive knowledge of and passion for the genre with a whole page dedicated to the king of hosts, Allen Ludden, and a multitude of links devoted to other game-show favorites. www.public.usit.net/sbeverly/index_gameshow.html

★★★★★

Still sitting at home yelling, "I want my Game Show Network"? While you wait for your cable company to add it to the lineup, peruse

GAME SHOW NETWORK's Web site. Download theme songs, preview original shows, chat with other game-show enthusiasts, or take the plunge into the network's search for real-life contestants. The best feature



Game shows aren't just for TV anymore. *The Gong Show's* Unknown Comic and other genre icons live forever online.

of this site is the set of hundreds of links to great games on the Web.

www.spe.sony.com/gsn ★★★★★

—C.E.



Has your web host
gotten a little
behind in support ?

www.litespeed.net

Microsoft® IIS 4.0!
Mercantec Softcart® 4.0 for NT!
30 Day Money Back Guarantee!
Expert Support Team!
99.9% Uptime!

Serious NT web hosting
at the Speed of Light!

FREE!

Virtual Webtrends 4.0
E-Mail Accounts
Domain Registration

LiteSpeed
Technologies, Ltd.

Plans starting at only **\$23.95!** **1.888.832.3929**

International News

THE BEST ★★★★★

Before the advent of the Web, it was difficult to find accurate and informed news about the world scene in the mainstream U.S. media. Nowadays, you no longer need a shortwave radio set to get the results of Icelandic parliamentary elections. The online version of **BBC NEWS** goes one step beyond its fabled radio broadcasts by offering photos and video clips on a full-service site that covers everything newsworthy, from business to entertainment. Strong points include its regular coverage of the African continent and its science reporting—two areas that usually get short shrift in the American media. Despite being a government entity, the BBC continues to set global standards for thorough and objective reporting.

news.bbc.co.uk ★★★★★

The U.K.'s conservative *Telegraph* was one of the first newspapers with an online presence, and its well-designed **ELECTRONIC TELEGRAPH** will be much appreciated by fans of the Rugby Union and Premier soccer. The news focus here is on the British Isles and Ireland, and the writing style is crisp, if a tad dry. The paper's famed Cryptic Crossword puzzles are available in both Java and printable versions.

www.telegraph.co.uk ★★★★★

THE REST ★★★★★

Founded in 1932, when Israel was still British Palestine, **THE JERUSALEM POST** is a middle-of-the-road English-language paper that has great influence on the world Jewish community. Its strength is

informed coverage of the Knesset, Israel's complex, multiparty parliament.

www.jpost.co.il ★★★★★

THE HINDU, a national Indian daily that began publishing in 1878, has a daily paid readership of more than 3 million. Highlights of its massive Web site are



What's the economic forecast in Russia? Get local updates from the online editions of *The St. Petersburg Times* and *The Moscow Times*.

the extensive Business Line links to financial news as well as colorful arts and culture features in the Sunday Magazine Folio. And don't miss the Matrimonials (found in the Classifieds), which offer a fascinating look at Hindu mating customs.

www.webpage.com/hindu ★★★★★

The granddaddy of all news wire services, **REUTERS**, used homing pigeons to carry early nineteenth-century financial news from continental Europe to the London stock exchange. Reuters' dispatches are well regarded for their accuracy and objectivity, and this no-frills site is essential for those interested in the "just-the-facts, Ma'am" approach to news about continental Europe.

www.reuters.com/news ★★★★★

The Osaka, Japan-based **ASAHI SHIMBUN** was founded in 1879 and has a reputation for both hard-nosed reporting and the use of innovative technology (in 1959, it was the first newspaper to use a fax machine). Asahi.com is a substantive digest of the daily print paper; global investors will appreciate its in-depth coverage of Asian financial news.

www.asahi.com/english/english.html ★★★★★

In addition to carrying the latest scoops from Australia, Melbourne's **THE AGE** is one cricket-mad Web site. Watch cricket live! Participate in cricket chat! But where's the mention of that cable-TV favorite, Australian Rules Football?

www.theage.com.au ★★★★★

Online since 1994, **THE ST. PETERSBURG TIMES**'s Web site is a good place to keep track of the calamitous scene in the former Soviet Union. Of special note is the Opinion section, which gives non-Russians a glimpse of the unofficial take on things. You can also click over to its sister paper, *The Moscow Times*, from here.

www.times.spb.ru ★★★★★

Independent Middle East papers are rare, and the English-language **EGYPTIAN GAZETTE** tries to steer clear of the government censor with articles on such subjects as the usefulness of Cairo's yellow pages.

www.egy.com ★★★★★

Aptly called **NEWSRACK** and sponsored by the U.K.'s John Menzies newsstand chain, this ingenious site links you to online newspapers around the globe.

www.newsrack.com ★★★★★

—J.L.

A LINK TOO FAR...

Despite the food shortages and demolished economy of its native land, **RADIO HABANA CUBA**'s online service gets "All the News That Doesn't Fit" into a supremely low-tech site. But, hey, where else will you find such headlines as "Revolutionaries Must Have Faith in Humanity"?

www.radiohc.org

Computer Viruses

THE BEST ★★★★★

Checking our computers for viruses, like backing up our files, is one of those chores that too many of us ignore until it's too late. If you've been on the Net long enough, you've probably received one of those hysterical e-mail messages about a deadly new virus that's coming to eat your hard drive. We all know that Good Times is a myth, but what about other messages with a ring of truth? How do you sort out the valid warnings from the hoaxes? Get the scoop at Rob Rosenberger's **COMPUTER VIRUS MYTHS** site. A welcome counterpoint to the ubiquitous virus hype from the media (and the manufacturers of anti-virus software), this site maintains a list of virus hoaxes. Check here first before forwarding that e-mail message to everyone you know.

www.kumite.com/myths ★★★★★

Your virus portal site on the Web is IBM's **ANTIVIRUS ONLINE**, which helps you separate fact from fiction. Designed like a journal, the site lets you read what science-fiction writer Bruce Sterling thinks of virus writers (his opinion is not too high) or delve into headier technical papers on computer-virus research. IBM recently partnered with Symantec to develop software jointly under the Norton AntiVirus banner, so some links here will take you to the Symantec site, which still features the **SYMANTEC ANTIVIRUS RESEARCH CENTER**. This is a great resource for international users, as it's available in several languages.

www.av.ibm.com/current/FrontPage ★★★★★

www.symantec.com/avcenter ★★★★★

THE REST ★★★★★

There's been more than one merger in the anti-virus world: **DR. SOLOMON'S**, the U.K.'s top anti-virus software company, recently merged with **NETWORK ASSOCIATES**. You can learn more about their existing product lines and the future integrated product selection at these sites. You'll also find the standard mix of virus information, hoax listings, downloadable update files, and tech-support help.

www.drsolomon.com ★★★★★

www.nai.com/products/antivirus ★★★★★

Though Windows PCs are the usual targets for viruses, Macs are not immune. If you're a Mac user, head to the **MAC VIRUS** site to keep your machine disinfected. There are virus FAQs, news about viruses and anti-virus software packages, and a handy guide to what's *not* a virus. All too often, users blame any strange behavior from their machine on a virus instead of

on a software conflict or hardware problem. This site will keep your Mac smiling.
www.macvirus.com ★★★★★

Though the makers of anti-virus software products all have helpful sites, in the end, they all want to sell you *their* software. For some simple, homegrown, commercial-free virus advice, check out **DOUG MUTH'S ANTI-VIRUS HELP PAGE**. Muth is a denizen of the *comp.virus* newsgroup, and his site gives you the lowdown on how to spot virus-infection symptoms, why you should make a set of floppy disks with which you can start your system, and how to determine if a particular anti-virus program is worth buying. You'll also find links to virus FAQs, free anti-virus utilities, and related sites.

www.claws-and-paws.com/virus ★★★★★

The independent computer-security company called ICSA operates **TECH ZONE**, which offers a variety of helpful anti-virus information, including its own list of certified products. In order to get ICSA certification, software must detect all viruses listed as being "in the wild" (i.e., infecting real computers) and must not cause any false alarms. You can also read the free weekly newsletter "Malicious News" to stay up to date on the latest virus outbreaks and hoaxes.

www.icsa.net/services/consortia/anti-virus

★★★★☆

There are thousands and thousands of viruses, but many of them exist only in research laboratories. Joe Wells's **WILDLIST** tells you which of these pernicious infiltrators have been documented in real-world situations. Reported by a group of qualified volunteers, these are the viruses about which you should be concerned. You'll see that macro viruses (the ones that can infect Word documents, for instance) are a significant chunk of those most likely to attack your computer. This should be an incentive for you to ensure that your anti-virus software checks for viruses of this type.

www.wildlist.org/WildList/wildlist.html

★★★★☆

—R. B.





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to the basic precepts of online privacy, all citizens have the right to control the flow of their personal data—not only such vital statistics as name, address, and salary, but also religious beliefs, political affiliation, and sexual orientation. And it's a right that Net users seem increasingly committed to defending. According to the Georgia Institute of Technology's **9th WWW User Survey**—[www.cc.gatech.edu/gvu/user_surveys/survey-1998-04/graphs/general/q46.htm], the most prestigious general census of Web habits—privacy has replaced censorship as the issue most important to surfers.

Online, privacy and deception are close cousins, with privacy advocates maintaining that lies about personal data—concealment, misdirection, and even outright trickery—are acceptable defenses against invasions of privacy. Furthermore, these advocates argue that if electronic identities are too easily penetrated, the very foundations of privacy are threatened. As with ceilings and floors, treasures and trash, the ultimate classification of lies as larkish masquerades or as vital self-defense is essentially a matter of perspective.

The protection of privacy is important everywhere in cyberspace, but especially in the realm of online marketing. Across the Net, users encounter sites that request their personal information. In the face of these requests, online lying is not merely a strategy for escaping detection but also a justifiable act of self-preservation and rebellion against predatory marketers.

Many surfers feel that evasive actions on the part of consumers are warranted—according to the GIT survey, more than 40 percent of Web users reported falsifying personal information at one time or another, and 10 percent said they lied at least half the time. A few sites actively encourage deception. One of them, **A RATIONAL ARGUMENT FOR LYING ON SURVEYS** [db.matadorrec.com/survey], is run by Carrie McLaren, director of multimedia and advertising at Matador Records. McLaren, who also maintains a zine called **STAY FREE!** [metalab.unc.edu/stayfree/15], is one of the Net's outspoken antimarketing activists. Visit her site, and you'll see a list of provocative links; click on any one, and you'll be taken to the same article. It's a demonstration, she says, of the tricks com-

panies use to hoodwink consumers.

"Lying to an advertiser or marketer is really the only easy defense mechanism people have for helping slow down the machine," says McLaren, who says *marketer* the way John Wayne said *Comanche* in *The Searchers*. "Corporate deception is what's scary—not the people telling tall ones in chat rooms."

Corporate deception, in this case, isn't upper-level espionage and counterespionage. It's a more flagrant form of deceit: companies refusing to disclose, or lying about, how they plan to use personal information submitted at their sites. If you disclose your salary while registering at a professional organization's Web site, you have the legal right to expect that the information will stay within the professional organization—unless the group's plans to sell or distribute the information are clearly communicated. Various national and international bodies, including the U.S. federal government and the European Union, have recommended certain guidelines for information collection—guidelines that many online marketers fail to meet.

"This problem is brought on by the marketing industry itself," says UCLA's Kang. "I have very little sympathy for big companies that ask for reams of biographical data and don't tell you how they're tracking you. For them to cry that it's unfair for consumers to not provide accurate data, for me, seems quite a stretch. The obligation is on them to give clear notice to the consumer and then live by the promises."

Such critics as McLaren cling to this David vs. Goliath picture of the marketing world, in which online users are outgunned by corporate giants, and lying is only freedom-fighting. But this rampant deception by users may have serious negative consequences. Not only does misinformation help create an Internet that can't accurately gauge its user population, but liars can hang themselves. Official financial documents require honest responses, even in cyberspace. Anyone who knowingly supplies false information on a credit card application, for example, is committing fraud against the sponsoring bank or financial institution.

In the end, marketers may benefit most from the same community-building tactics that have been used to resolve pri-

vacy and deception issues in noncommercial environments. According to Stuart Gibbel, director of marketing at Net audience-measurement firm Cyber Dialogue, Net marketing efforts employ traditional incentives—e.g., the user's greed—but have also begun to capitalize on the bonds between users and their online communities: "In most custom [market-research] work, there is an incentive—\$5 for a survey, 25 bucks for a focus group. If people don't give us their correct name and address, they can't get a check or cash it," he says. "Another thing to keep in mind is that much of our work is site analysis. For example, users of a certain site would be selected randomly, and we would ask them if they would be willing to answer a survey to help improve the site. They may still be offered cash, but the real incentive is improving a site that they use. When you select users of a site, you are more likely to get heavy users of the site that are very likely to be interested in providing their feedback."

Even more jarring is a recent study by Yankelovich Partners in which 83 percent of adults said that they would prefer to deal with online marketing software that acted more human. In other words, users would be more tolerant of online marketing efforts that impersonated people. Deceit would abate in the face of deceit.

"That's ironic, yes," says McLaren. "But I usually don't believe marketing surveys."

LAST YEAR, CHICAGO POLICE arrested a man for selling stolen police badges over the Internet. For upward of \$1,200, anyone who purchased his wares could pass as a Chicago police officer ("I'm not a policeman, but I play one thanks to the Internet"). The Windy City Wired Police Badge Fraud is a comic footnote to a serious problem—the fact that the Internet has become the latest playground for scamsters, con men, and rip-off artists perpetrating crimes of impersonation. "Not every deception in real space is considered illegal," says Jerry Kang. "When a guy tries to pick up a woman in a bar and says he's a CEO, that's not illegal. But when there's money involved, it's considered fraud."

And not just money. The most headline-grabbing impersonation crimes, of course, are those involving pedophilia,

where adults—usually men—pose as teenagers to snare young children. Police have beaten them by joining them, impersonating children themselves in pedophilia stings. And industry leaders are pushing the Safe Playground Law, which would make it a federal crime for an adult to impersonate a child in a designated kids-only area on the Net. In trying to set limits on impersonation, the law has triggered an odd, defensive backlash from free-speech activists. “You don’t really know who anybody is,” said Jim Dempsey, a lawyer and senior staff counsel at the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Democracy and Technology, in an interview with the Louisville *Courier-Journal*. “You should basically assume that any or all of the people in a chat room are police officers pretending to be 14-year-old girls. Whatever you say can be used against you.”

Pedophilia may garner media attention, but subtler forms of identity forgery are beginning to crop up. A Northern California woman was convicted of falsifying documents in early 1997 after a jury found that she had hacked into her boss’s e-mail account to fabricate a message that had helped to prove an earlier wrongful-termination claim. An Irvine, California, salesman named John Mash filed a \$1 million suit, claiming a former associate had libeled him by using Mash’s e-mail account to send a series of what appeared to be self-incriminating messages. America Online has weathered a series of high-profile cases involving stolen usernames and passwords; one involved rock star Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails, whose identity was appropriated by a fan.

And last October saw a case of the impersonal that was not personal, but institutional: InterNIC, the organization responsible for managing Net addresses, received an e-mail ostensibly from America Online asking InterNIC to change AOL’s domain registration. Since the e-mail appeared to be from an authorized AOL official, InterNIC complied, temporarily turning AOL into America Off-line. The e-mail was later exposed as a forgery.

Can e-mail fakes be stopped? Most service providers forbid e-mail forgery in their Standard Acceptable Use policies. A common version of such policies reads,

“Forging electronic mail headers (addresses), or any other method used to disguise Customer’s identity, is strictly prohibited.” Still, if authorities can’t stop currency counterfeiters, it’s unlikely that they’ll be able to curb e-mail forgers, especially when the Net is full of such handy primers as **E-MAIL FORGERY** [www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8441/forgery2.html]. The tone is disapproving, but the advice is accurate—like an anarchist’s cookbook that offers a bomb-making recipe.

As inventors across the country race toward a foolproof method of verifying electronic identity—digital signatures and lock-and-key encryption schemes are some of the most common—legislators are seizing upon identity theft as a hot-button issue. New Jersey has passed laws that attach stiffer penalties to some types of wrongful impersonation; under these statutes, such crimes as the stealing of a Social Security number for use in a loan application would be considered “identity theft.” And the Identity Theft and Assumption Deterrence Act of 1998, signed into law by President Clinton last October, makes the crime of posing as another person for economic gain, whether off- or online, a felony with sentences that range from 3 years to 25 years.

LYING AND THE SELF. LYING and the almighty dollar. Lying and the scales of justice. Where does it all lead? Ralph Waldo Emerson, never one to pass up the chance to make a sweeping statement, wrote, “Every violation of truth is not only a sort of suicide in the liar, but is a stab at the health of human society.” By Emerson’s standards, Net society would be as cut up as the cast of *Scream*. “On some level, this is a concern,” says author Jeffrey Zaleski, whose *The Soul of Cyberspace* (HarperCollins, 1997) examines how the Net affects religion and spirituality. “In a more subtle way, if you get into the practice of lying about yourself, you’re not able to see yourself. You begin to see the mirage.”


Still, if this change is happening, it’s a long way off, and many observers of the online world feel that people will develop more-sophisticated strategies for reading their environment and decoding pseudonyms. “You can see this already beginning to happen,” says Judith Donath. “In a chat room, if someone

comes up to you and says, ‘I’m a hot chick with huge breasts,’ most people assume that’s a man. I’m not sure this would have happened before the Net.”

Even Zaleski says he doesn’t foresee any long-term damage: “I’ve met many people who grew up with the online world, with this idea of flexible identity and lying, and they’re great people. I don’t see that it’s really harmed them. I grew up as part of the generation that was supposed to be blasted away because we watched so much TV. I watched a lot of TV as a kid. I thought it was great. Human beings are incredibly resilient.”

The problem may also diminish as the online world grows. “Sherry Turkle’s book about MUDs [*Life on the Screen*, Simon & Schuster, 1997] has a pretty thorough analysis of role-playing online, and it’s great in some ways,” says Donath. “But one of the problems I have is that she’s talking to teenagers, and an identity crisis in teenagers is absolutely predictable. People go through it and experiment with their sexual identity, wear costumes. It’s not possible to look at those people and extrapolate generalizations about the Net.” ECHO’s Stacy Horn agrees: “In my experience, when people stay online over a long time, they can’t help being themselves. People are very attached to their personalities, and they want to show them.”

Then there are those who feel that technology will have to solve the problem it has created. On an IRC channel, I got into an interesting discussion with someone claiming to be a retired engineer living in Idaho. We joked about militias and the Unabomber, and then he told me to look for his name in the headlines. He was working, he said, on a cyberpolygraph, a piece of software that would collate various indicators and determine whether the person on the other end of an online conversation was telling the truth. It could tell you if he or she was lying about his or her gender. It could tell you if he or she was lying about his or her profession. It displayed deceit as a series of lights and sounds, and he estimated that it would retail for \$200. “There are still kinks,” he wrote, “but so far, so good—it works about 80 percent of the time.”

I wished I had one of the devices. I would have switched it on right then and there. Was he lying? Or am I? 



PRETTY P S STRANGE

BY SCOTT ALEXANDER



The Folkways Archive

<http://ftp.mcad.edu/piotr2/folkways/start.html>

Do you long to be an agitator? A poster paster? A slogan scrawler? Now you can craft the political statement of your dreams, complete with the requisite striking iconography. Just pick a noble cause (for the "Long live _____"

spot) and a nefarious plague (for the "Down with _____"

spot), and then choose which of the 50 available objects should be defiantly held aloft in the image. Finally, a place to express your radical feelings about lime Jell-O and Twinkies.

Shredder 1.0

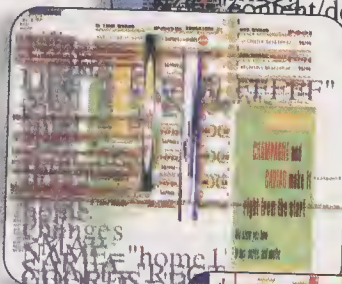
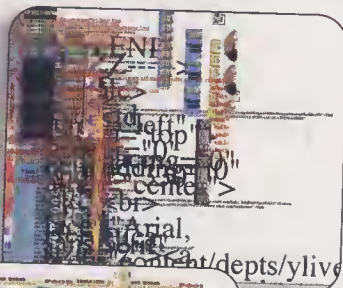
www.potatoland.org/shredder

Did you just surf to a site that you'd rather no one else knew you visited? Run across a page that made you want to punch a hole in your monitor?

Don't get mad: Get shredding. Shredder 1.0 is an alternative browser that cuts up the page of your choice into tiny pieces and re-arranges it into a hopelessly unintelligible mess.

Want to give your favorite Webmaster a heart attack? Shred his site, and send him a screen shot.

Shredded sites, from top: **YAHOO! INTERNET LIFE ONLINE**, www.yil.com; **EPICURI-
OUS FOOD**, www.food.epicurious.com;
and **ZDNet**, www.zdnet.com.



Toothcam

www.caltech.edu/~pinelab/TimeLapse/ToothCam/toothcam.html

Steve Potter calls himself a "geeky scientist," and we'd have to agree. It takes discipline, determination, and a whole boatload of geek power



to photograph one's teeth throughout the course of one's dental work. However, the result—a time-lapse movie of Potter's teeth moving around as if his gums were made of gelatin—more than justifies a walk on the geek side.

alt. mega-ego yonderboy Manifesto

www.emf.net/~estephen/manifesto/aum00092.html

In case you were wondering how Yonderboy feels about today's issues, he's posted his manifesto on the Web. You'll find answers to the eternal questions "Coke or Pepsi?", "McDonald's or Burger King?," and "Do you usually talk to yourself?" You'll also be able to sample some of Yonderboy's fascinating discoveries, such as the fact that "most everything has to be fresh and full of life for it to be interesting." And lest you think he's an ingrate, Yonderboy would like to thank all the little people. That is: "The Smurfs, Gary Coleman, Spud Webb, and all of my friends on Lilliput."

German UFO Watch

[www.aircooledmind.org/
alien.html](http://www.aircooledmind.org/alien.html)

While Mulder and Scully

waste their time uncovering "conspiracies"

only *they* seem to be able to see, a few devoted Web weavers are actually getting something done, alien-wise. The proprietors of Seeking the Aircooledmind have traced the UFOs' origins to Germany, by way of tell-tale engineering signatures in the craft. Do you think the initials **VW** were a bit of a giveaway?



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Millennia MAX 450

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RAM	64MB SDRAM	64MB 100MHz SDRAM	128MB 100MHz SDRAM	128MB 100MHz SDRAM
Hard Drive	8.4GB Ultra ATA hard drive*	8.4GB Ultra ATA hard drive*	13GB Ultra ATA hard drive*	13GB Ultra ATA hard drive*
Monitor	17" Micron 700Vx monitor (15.9" display)	17" Micron 700Vx monitor (15.9" display)	17" Micron 700Vx monitor (15.9" display)	17" Micron 700Vx monitor (15.9" display)
DVD/CD-ROM	40X max speed CD-ROM drive	40X max speed CD-ROM drive	6X DVD-ROM drive (free upgrade from 4.8X DVD-ROM drive)	6X DVD-ROM drive (free upgrade from 4.8X DVD-ROM drive)
Modem	3Com USRobotics V.90 WinModem**	3Com USRobotics V.90 WinModem**	3Com USRobotics V.90 WinModem**	3Com USRobotics V.90 WinModem**
Graphics	nVidia Riva 128, 8MB SGRAM 3D 2X AGP graphics	nVidia Riva 128, 8MB SGRAM 3D 2X AGP graphics	16MB Diamond Viper 550 Tnt 2X AGP graphics	16MB Diamond Viper 550 Tnt 2X AGP graphics
Sound System	PCI 64-voice Wavetable sound	PCI 64-voice Wavetable sound	PCI 128-voice Wavetable sound	PCI 128-voice Wavetable sound
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The Critics Rave



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